

LUFTWAFFE COLOURS
Volume Four Section 1



JAGDWAFFE

**David Wadman
& Martin Pegg**

**HOLDING
THE WEST**

1941-1943



1941

HOLDING THE WEST

"I was only able to leave the Western Front so completely uncovered because I had two such outstanding Geschwader to leave behind."

*Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring,
5 December 1941*

"When you look at how we fought against the Americans later, the Battle of Britain was very little in comparison."

*Post-war comment by
Julius Meimberg, formerly Staffelkapitän of 11./JG 2*

"Opening fire from behind at 300 metres distance, and taking five to six seconds to overtake the bombers, these attacks were indescribable in their sheer physical and mental stress. Just imagine standing under a shower with 160 jets of water pouring out and not getting wet! That, of course, is quite impossible. Even when we attacked with four [aircraft] in line abreast in an effort to split up the defensive fire, statistically there were still 40 guns firing at each one of us."

*Otto Stammberger, formerly Oberleutnant and Staffelkapitän of 4./JG 26,
describing rear attacks on US four-engined bombers.*



The Channel Front in mid-1941

In late June 1941, following the departure of units eastwards in preparation for Operation 'Barbarossa', the German invasion of Russia, only two front-line day fighter *Jagdgeschwader* remained in Northern France and Belgium; JG 2 'Richthofen' and JG 26 'Schlageter'. These units were responsible for the daylight defence of occupied north-west Europe from Belgium to the Bay of Biscay and had been intentionally left in the West because of their previous experience and success. Although they were outnumbered by the RAF and their area of responsibility was large, unit morale was high. Pilots had recovered from the strain of the battles of 1940, most *Gruppen* possessed a superb fighter in the Bf 109 F, and pilots knew that if they were shot down over France, their chances of survival were now far greater than when they had fought over Southern England and the Channel the year previously. On 1 May, JG 26 had achieved its 500th aerial victory and JG 2 'Richthofen' was only days away from celebrating its 644th victory, the same number as achieved by *Jagdgeschwader* *Frhr. von Richthofen* Nr. 1 during the First World War. Both units were about to enter their most successful phase of the air war, and between them had an establishment of 236 aircraft, although JG 26 lacked its 7. *Staffel* which was in the Mediterranean and II./JG 26 was soon to be withdrawn to exchange its Bf 109 E-7s for the new radial-engined Fw 190.

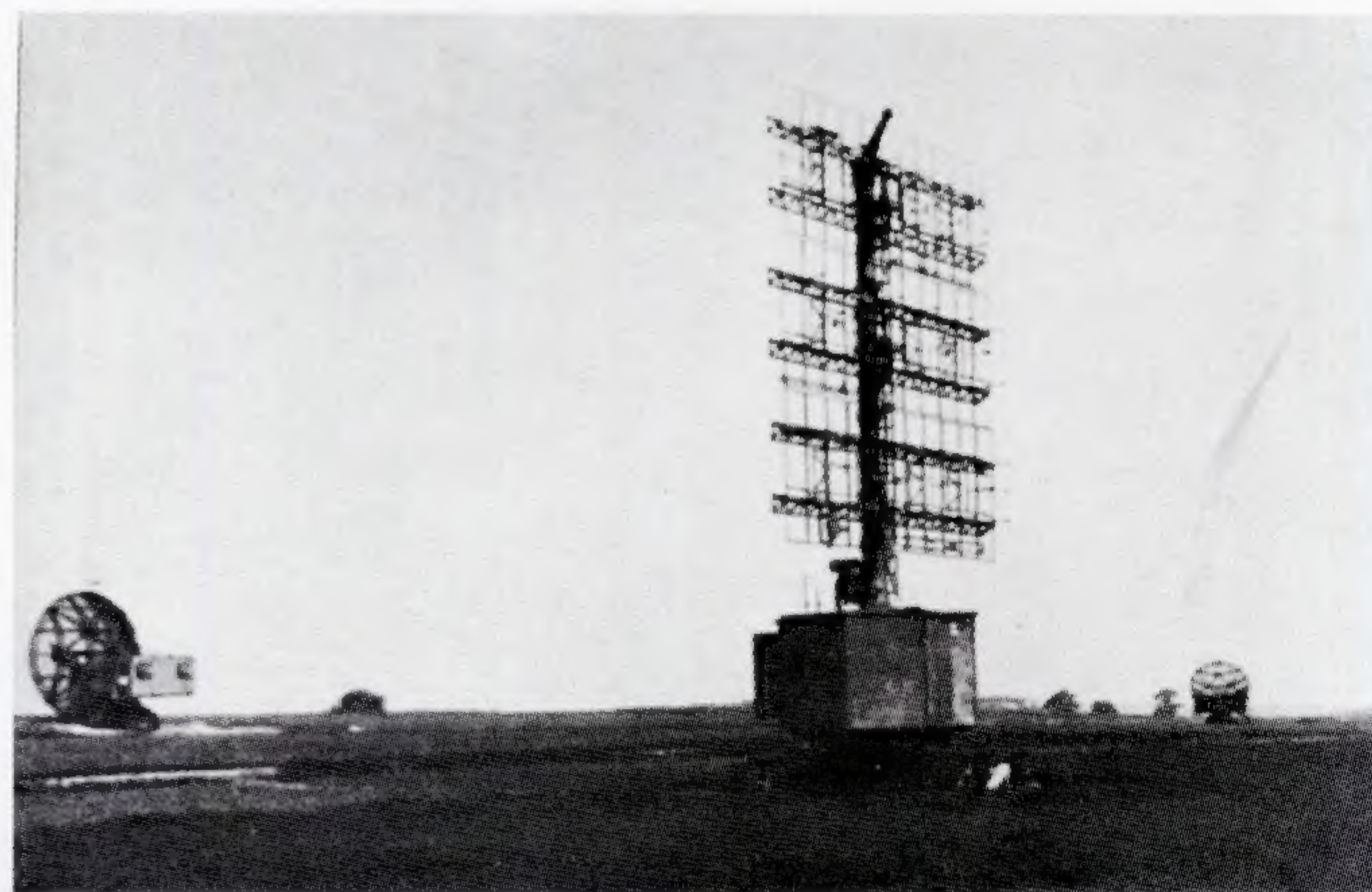
While JG 2 and JG 26 held the Channel coast, other front-line day fighter units on the Western Front, excluding Norway, were I./JG 52 in Holland with an establishment of 40 aircraft, and parts of I./JG 1 with an establishment of 28 aircraft. Only formed in June 1941, I./JG 1 was based at various airfields for the defence of Northern Europe but, as units based in Holland moved to other fronts, JG 1 covered that area too. Finally, there was a number of *Einsatzstaffeln*, or Operational Training Squadrons, which, nominally at least, had an establishment of 48 aircraft, but their role was limited and they were not truly front-line units.

Apart from these fighter units, the only other forces remaining in France after the invasion of Russia were those engaged in the night bombing of Britain or those flying anti-shipping and reconnaissance missions. Although *Luftwaffe* units in the West therefore amounted to little more than a token force, they proved to be extremely effective in holding down in Britain a considerable number of fighters which, at the time, could have been employed in the Mediterranean theatre. Moreover, the *Luftwaffe's* numerical disadvantage was to some extent offset by the establishment in France of an early warning radar system, although no fighter control service had yet been set up which could locate and vector German formations onto the enemy force. Generally, the German system worked well although it was affected by bad weather, and on one occasion, when a force of 54 Blenheim light bombers mounted a daylight cloud-cover raid on power stations near Cologne, the defences were completely unaware of the attack until bombs fell on the targets.

The early RAF offensive missions into occupied Europe were at first designed merely to maintain a constant pressure on *Luftwaffe* forces in the West and to draw up German fighters where, it was hoped, they could be destroyed in a war of attrition. However, with the German attack upon Russia in June 1941, such efforts acquired additional importance and Fighter Command's offensive operations then became an integral part of a policy of affording assistance to the Russians. By intensifying operations, it was considered possible not only to hold down in north-west France a large German fighter force which otherwise could have been usefully employed on the Eastern Front, but also to force the *Luftwaffe* to withdraw units from the East in order to strengthen its fighter defences in France.

Following the invasion of Russia, there was therefore a marked increase in the number of RAF missions flown to attack targets in France. Most British formations consisted of about 25 bombers with three times as many escort fighters, but sometimes formations with as many as 80 bombers and a proportionately larger escort were encountered with the escorts tied to the bombers in much the same way as were the German fighters in the Battle of Britain. The RAF bombers' altitude was usually about 21,000 feet and, typically, the German fighters, maintaining radio silence, would climb to a position

BELOW: The Freya FuMG 39G was the first German operational early warning radar defence system. Operating on a waveband of between 1.8 and 2.0 metres, early versions had an effective range of 60 km, later increased to 120 km. On the Channel Front, the Freya sets were paired with the smaller Würzburg sets, also visible in this photograph, the Freya locating and tracking incoming aircraft and, as the aircraft came closer, the Würzburg determining the exact range and height.



above and behind the British formations. When contact with the incoming formation was made, the German formation leader broke radio silence to place his formations in the most tactically advantageous positions before diving through the British fighter escort to attack the bombers.

In view of the risks associated with this kind of attack, it was at this time that *Oberstleutnant* Adolf Galland, *Kommodore* of JG 26, and the members of his *Stabsschwarm*, devised another method of attacking the British formations. Using cloud cover, the four fighters gradually infiltrated the RAF formation, making no sudden movements that would attract attention. Once the fighters were well placed, Galland would select a convenient part of the bomber formation at which to strike, lead his *Schwarm* in to the attack and then dive away before the escort could react. These tactics proved successful on a number of occasions.

A second and similar tactic developed by Galland called for the attacking fighter pilot to fly alone in order to be successful. In this manoeuvre the pilot would climb slowly out of the clouds beneath a bomber formation while other German fighters occupied the attention of the fighter escort by conspicuously positioning themselves high in the rear of the British formation as though preparing for an attack. If he remained unseen, Galland was often able to position himself behind one of the lower elements of the bomber formation and make a successful attack before diving away. However, as this form of attack required a low approach speed in order to be effective, it was regarded as very dangerous and he depended on a quick dive into the clouds for escape if discovered prematurely.

RAF 'Circuses'¹ were now occurring almost daily, sometimes with more than one attack taking place each day. On 8 July, for example, a raid in the morning was directed against Lens, and Lille was the target in the afternoon. Fighter Command actually lost 13 Spitfires during the day, but *Luftwaffe* fighter claims initially totalled 21. Evidently, it was realised that there was some overclaiming and not all claims were confirmed, but the pilots of JG 2 '*Richthofen*' were eventually credited with seven victories, bringing the *Geschwader's* total to the 644 required to equal that of its First World War namesake. During the day, *Lt.* Egon Mayer of 7. *Staffel*, who had received the *Ritterkreuz* a week earlier, claimed four Spitfires and a Blenheim, while *Oblt.* Josef Priller, *Staffelkapitän* of 1./JG 26 claimed a Spitfire as his 34th victory. One particularly successful pilot was the *Staffelkapitän* of 9./JG 2, *Oblt.* Siegfried Schnell, whose three victories brought his personal score to 40 and earned him the award of the *Eichenlaub*. Schnell, already at this time one of JG 2's highest-scoring pilots, again distinguished himself on the 9th when the RAF sent a 'Circus' to Marzingerbe. On this occasion, early *Luftwaffe* claims were for 17 Spitfires against an actual loss of eight, but all six Spitfires claimed by Schnell were confirmed.

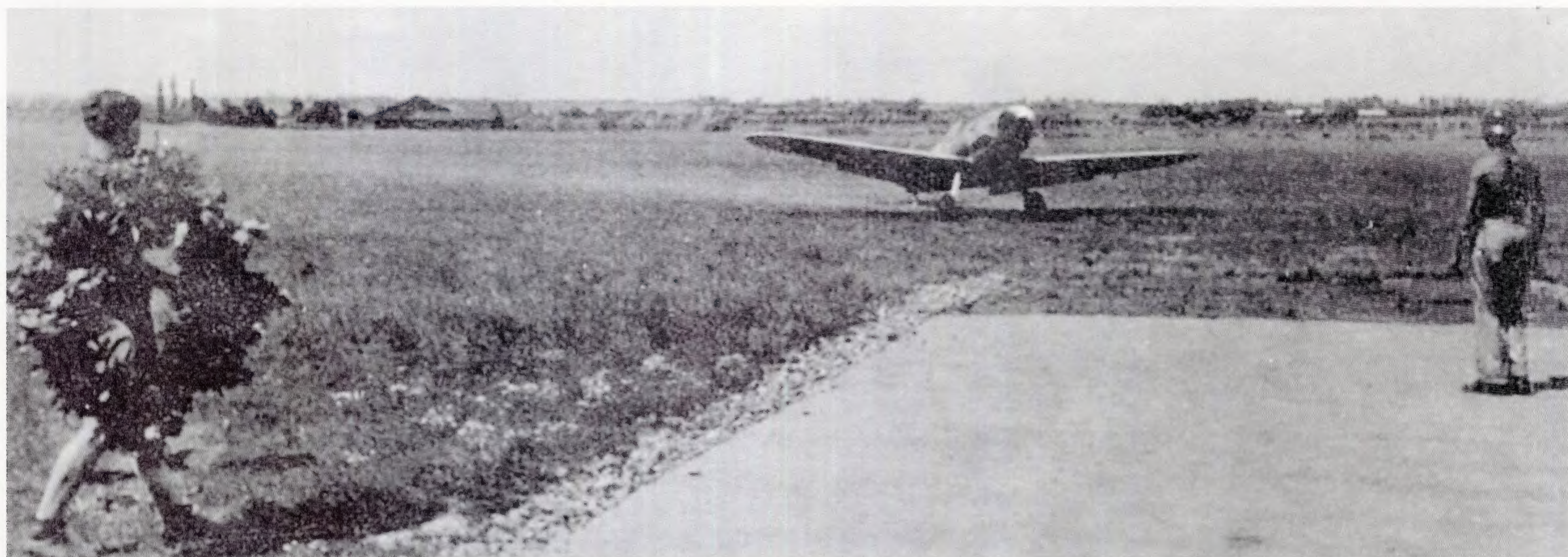
Lt. Egon Mayer, photographed in the Summer of 1941 with the Bf 109 F-4 normally flown by *Oblt.* Josef Puchinger of Stab III./JG 2. Because the airflow over the wing tended to carry the exhaust gasses over the fuselage in an upward curve, the upper edge of the dark paint over the wing root has been raised accordingly to form a peak. Note also the thin white band around the rear fuselage and the Stab markings which consist of a white chevron and two vertical white bars, all edged in black, seen more clearly in the photograph above right. This aircraft had the Gruppe's cock's head badge on the engine cowling and the yellow rudder was marked with ten victory bars.



On 14 July, *Oblt.* Priller shot down a Spitfire near Dunkirk as his 40th victory and was awarded the *Eichenlaub*. Four days later, *Fw.* Ernst Jäckel of 2./JG 26 became the first of the *Luftwaffe's* day fighter pilots to destroy a four-engined bomber, a Short Stirling brought down off the Kent coast. This, Jäckel's sixth victory, earned him a reward of 500 *Reichsmark* and a special trophy. Another leading ace at this time was *Hptm.* Hans 'Assi' Hahn, *Kommandeur* of III./JG 2, who was awarded the *Eichenlaub* on 14 August after achieving 42 victories and who would eventually claim a total of 68 in the West before being given another command on the Eastern Front in mid-November 1942 where he claimed a further 40 victories.

1. Heavily escorted bomber incursions designed to bring enemy fighters into combat rather than destroy the target.

July 1941-August 1943



ABOVE AND BELOW LEFT AND RIGHT: As the attack on Russia, which opened on 22 June 1941, was expected only to last a matter of six weeks, it was originally planned that both JG 2 and JG 26 would spend a short three-week period on the newly opened Eastern Front, JG 2 taking the first three weeks and JG 26 the second. However, because of the intensification of the British daylight bombing offensive over France, it was decided to keep the two Jagdgeschwader in the West where they would be responsible for the daylight defence of occupied north-west Europe from Belgium to the Bay of Biscay. Both Jagdgeschwader were among the best fighter units in the Luftwaffe; their losses at this time were very low and scarcely any new or inexperienced pilots were to be found in their ranks. These photographs show Oblt. Josef Priller, Staffelfkapitän of I./JG 26, returning to St. Omer-Clairmarais on the morning of 14 July 1941 following his 40th victory and the subsequent celebratory drink with his ground crew and members of his Staffel. The victory, a Spitfire Mk Vb of 72 Squadron, earned Priller the award of the Eichenlaub while his victim, Sgt. W. Lamberton, would spend the rest of the war as a prisoner.



ABOVE: Ofw. Josef Wurmheller, lighting cigarette, with other 'Richthofen' pilots in the Summer of 1941. Standing second from right is the Staffelfkapitän of I./JG 2, Oblt. Rudolf Pflanz.

Spitfires lost that day, bringing his total to 33 victories. A number of JG 2's pilots also made claims, including Major Oesau and Lt. Mayer, each of whom claimed two Spitfires. Also claiming two was Ofw. Josef Wurmheller who, at the end of the Battle of Britain, had four victories and had survived being twice shot down in the Channel. After a period in hospital, he had returned to his unit, JG 53, and claimed 9 victories in Russia before being transferred to the West and joining II./JG 2 at the end of July. During the following months, Wurmheller would develop into one of the RAF's most dangerous adversaries on the Channel Front.



Another well-known pilot flying with JG 26 at this time was the *Kommandeur* of III./JG 26, Major Gerhard Schöpfel, who had been one of the most successful pilots during the Battle of Britain. On 21 August he accounted for one of the 14

The Consequences of an Interrogation

On 10 July, *Hptm.* Rolf Pingel, the *Kommandeur* of II./JG 2, intercepted a number of RAF Stirling bombers returning from an unsuccessful mission and followed one to the British coast. According to Pingel, before he could open fire, and possibly as a result of defensive fire from the bomber, the engine of his aircraft failed and, selecting a suitable landing place, he crash-landed his Bf 109 F-2 at Deal, in Kent, where he was taken prisoner (See Volume 2, Section 4, Pages 380 and 381). As a *Ritterkreuzträger* with 22 victories, Pingel was an important capture and his subsequent interrogation over the next few weeks was to have interesting consequences, particularly in relation to the RAF's offensive policy.

At that time, claims by RAF pilots had led Fighter Command to believe it was inflicting serious casualties on the *Jagdgeschwader* in France, yet the German fighter force was still able to take to the air in strength. So far as was known to the RAF, the *Jagdwaaffe* had not been reinforced by any fresh front-line units from elsewhere, so how could they possibly continue to maintain such strength if it had really suffered the high losses RAF pilots were claiming? Pingel maintained that it could not, stating that such high losses as were being claimed by the RAF would not only have represented the destruction of half the total available fighter strength in France, but that the *Luftwaaffe* would have been quite unable to make good such high wastage. In view of the sustained German fighter strength in France, the RAF drew the obvious conclusion: Fighter Command was not, in fact, inflicting the casualties its pilots claimed.

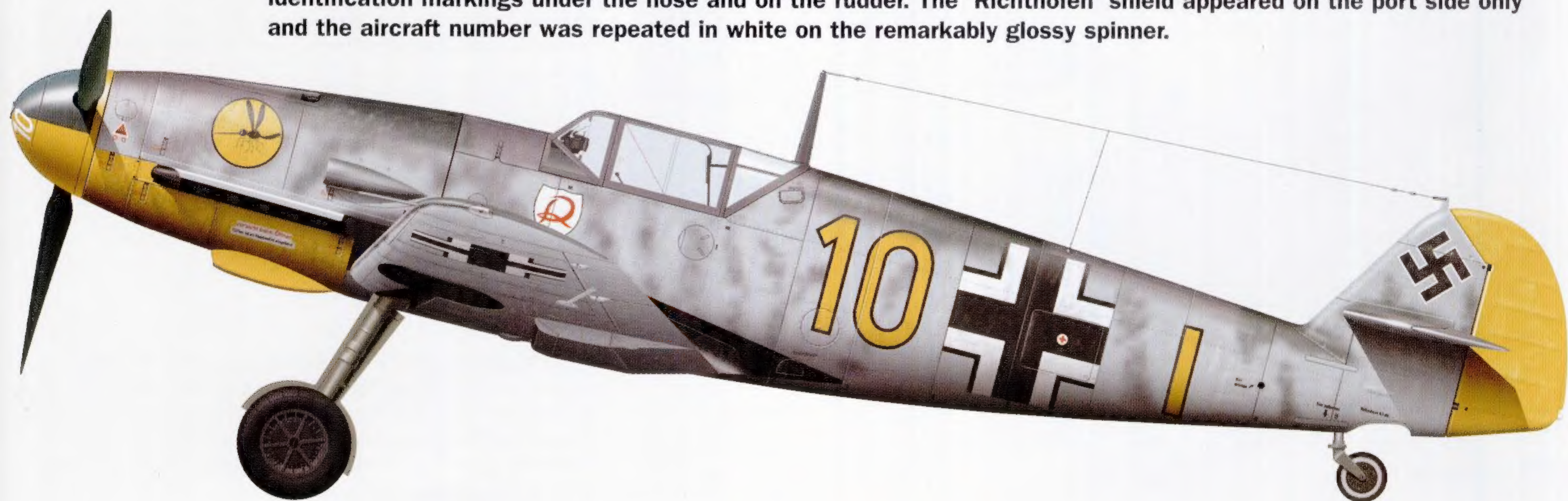
Pingel's statements also clearly indicated that the aim of inducing the *Luftwaaffe* to move its forces from east to west had not been, and was not likely to be, achieved. Moreover, they revealed that the daylight offensive was resulting in much heavier casualties to Fighter Command than to the *Jagdwaaffe*. Consequently, following a conference on 29 July to review the situation, the RAF decided to reduce the intensity of its offensive. The RAF, however, had failed to realise that, overall, its offensive had not in fact been entirely without effect. When it had begun, German serviceability stood at 73 per cent, but as a consequence of the increased wear and tear on aircraft, by August, a month after Pingel's capture, this had dropped to 70 per cent. Thus, at the very time the offensive was beginning to have some effect, the RAF decided to reduce the intensity of its offensive. Soon the two *Geschwader* were as strong as they had been in the Spring and, by September, serviceability had increased still further to 81 per cent.

BELOW LEFT AND RIGHT: 'Yellow 10' an early Bf 109 F of 9./JG 2 flown by Uffz. Hofmann displaying several interesting features including the camouflage pattern on the fuselage sides which consists of large irregular patches instead of the prescribed mottle. Note also the apparently high-gloss finish on the spinner, to which has been added the white number 10.



Messerschmitt Bf 109 F-2 'Yellow 10' flown by Uffz. Hofmann of 9./JG 2, France, Summer 1941

This aircraft was finished in RLM 74 and 75 on the uppersurfaces with RLM 76 undersurfaces and carried yellow identification markings under the nose and on the rudder. The 'Richthofen' shield appeared on the port side only and the aircraft number was repeated in white on the remarkably glossy spinner.





Messerschmitt Bf 109 F-4 of Stab, III./JG 2, France, Autumn 1941

Finished in an RLM 74/75/76 scheme, this aircraft carried the Stab markings of the Kommandeur of III./JG 2 and may have been W.Nr. 7183, one of the machines flown by Hptm. Hans 'Assi' Hahn and later decorated with victory bars on the rudder. The script 'R' emblem of the 'Richthofen' Geschwader, so long a feature of the unit's aircraft, did not appear on this machine. The white band around the rear fuselage was a variation of the III. Gruppe vertical bar and is most frequently seen on Stab aircraft. The white Stab markings were also a feature of JG 2's aircraft.



TOP: At the time of this photograph, probably taken in the Autumn of 1941, the Kommandeur of III./JG 2 was Hptm. Hans 'Assi' Hahn and it is believed that this aircraft, a Bf 109 F-4, was one of the machines assigned to him. It will be noted, however, that the rudder has not yet been marked with a victory tally, probably indicating that this is a new machine recently arrived from the factory.

LEFT: If the machine above was indeed flown by Hahn, it was almost certainly W.Nr. 7183, as seen here at St. Pol, now with a rounded front to the distinctive black areas around the exhaust outlets and wing root. Note also that the machine was evidently later fitted with FuG 25 equipment, the aerial for which may be seen below the fuselage.

The Introduction of the Fw 190

It is a general misconception that when the Fw 190 entered service it was an immediate success with very few problems whereas in fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Although Kurt Tank's airframe was superb, especially in his design to reduce the air resistance of the machine's bulky BMW 801 radial engine, overheating was to prove a major problem in the fighter's early service career.

Overheating originally manifested itself with the BMW 139 powered prototype, and when Focke-Wulf's chief test pilot Hans Sander made his first test flight, he commented that 'it felt as though I had my feet in the fireplace'. Installing the new BMW 801 engine and repositioning the cockpit rearwards did something to alleviate the overheating problem, but it failed to overcome the many other difficulties that beset the aircraft's power plant. As Heinrich Beauvais, the famous Rechlin test pilot was to put it: 'The future of this type entirely depends on the development of the BMW 801'.

It is now recognised that the ultimate success of the fighter has to be credited largely to the skill and dedication of *Oblt.* Otto Behrens, a fighter expert from the Rechlin Test Centre.¹ On the 22 February 1941 the first of six Fw 190 A-0s were delivered to *Erprobungsstaffel* 190, a special test unit under his command based at Rechlin-Roggenthin. By August, following a period of intense work, difficulties with the fighter had been sufficiently overcome to allow the first production A-1s to be delivered to 6./JG 26 under *Oblt.* Walter Schneider. On 7 August the first fighters were ferried from Le Bourget to the *Staffel's* operational base at Morseele, but problems continued.

Some idea of the difficulties experienced with the BMW 801 engine can be gleaned from a much-abbreviated summary of a document² written by Behrens concerning the problems:

"So far there have been no complaints about burned-out exhaust valves on operational aircraft. However, the average flying hours of the 6. Staffel are approximately 30, or 70 with the four conversion aircraft. Since 24 July 1941 only C 3 fuel is being used by the Fw 190. With this, the engine allegedly overheats and also has red exhaust flames. New sealed sparking plugs have resulted in takeoff power rpm dropping from approximately 2,700 to 2,450 and the engine vibrates. On removal the plugs are slightly oiled.

According to BMW, recent compressor damage is due to the ingestion of foreign matter. Oblt. Behrens does not believe this is the sole reason, since impeller fractures have occurred at the altitude for automatic compressor operation, and in one case also a hub fracture. BMW are to thoroughly check engines returned with compressor damage to ascertain whether the cause is foreign matter.

Having visited Focke-Wulf Bremen, Oblt. Behrens asks why no new engines are available for production airframes. In this connection, BMW draws attention to initial problems with the BMW 801 D series production, chiefly difficulties with the pistons similar to those with the BMW 801 A-2.

In one case, an engine fire occurred during run-up due to leaking flexible fuel pipe connectors on the pendulum type barrel valve. BMW have solved the problem by replacing the aluminium-asbestos sealing rings with pure aluminium seals and improved safety clips. The assumption that ammunition explosions have been caused by too high temperatures in the ammunition container has not been confirmed since maximum temperatures of 650 were measured during flight tests. JG 26 is now demanding the insertion of a metal shield between the oil sump and the lower exhaust nozzles, to prevent leaking fuel from igniting on the hot exhaust pipes."

These problems meant that of the nine II./JG 26 Fw 190s which crashed between August and September 1941, only two were the result of combat and one due to an undercarriage collapse, the remaining six suffering engine failures. Although matters gradually improved, problems continued to be experienced with various technical failures. In April 1942, for example, 36 operational Fw 190s were reported lost or damaged. Of these, 20 were due to combat, one to pilot error, one to bad weather, only three to engine failure but 10 to other technical faults. Despite this, another report³ complained that a total of 40 engines had to be changed or had failed. A further nine had been lost as a result of oil pipe rupture, but the cause of this had been eliminated late in the month by the removal of the warm oil connection pipe.

The same report also addressed the other technical failures. Many problems were experienced with ill-fitting ailerons and elevators. In tight turns at 300 km/h (186 mph) the aircraft would suddenly roll in the opposite direction and enter a spin. The main cause of this was that components manufactured by the two main licensees, Arado and Ago, showed great variations. It was therefore recommended that only ailerons made by Focke-Wulf could be fitted to Focke-Wulf built wings, Arado ailerons to Arado built wings



ABOVE:
Pre-production
Fw 190s being
run-up at the
Focke-Wulf factory
in Bremen.

should be replaced by BMW 801 D powered A-3s as soon as possible.

In the months that followed, a number of losses are believed to have been due to a problem with the tail trimming system which resulted in aircraft being thrown into a high-speed stall without warning. At low level, this manoeuvre was usually fatal, but as with most problems associated with the Fw 190, solutions were found and the type became one of the finest fighters of the war. Apart from its use as an interceptor it also doubled as a ground-attack and reconnaissance aircraft and was certainly the *Luftwaffe's* best piston-engined fighter.

Although the Fw 190's performance fell off above 20,000 ft, the machine proved markedly superior to the RAF's Spitfire Vs and Hurricane IIs, but it was some months before German pilots began to consider it as satisfactory and reliable as the Bf 109 F. Nevertheless, as the technical problems were overcome, so the new fighter began to make its presence felt in the skies over France.

etc. 'This situation,' the report concluded, 'is intolerable in view of the current shortage of ailerons.'

Other problems were reported with the undercarriage, particularly with brakes and wheel rims which often resulted in burst tyres or even damage to the wing. Cockpit canopies did not close properly and, as a result of the cowling being enlarged, the starter handle was found to be 30 mm too short! The poor external paint finish was also criticised.

The report concluded by saying that JG 26 had 21 Fw 190 A-1/A-2s and 32 A-3 aircraft, but that operational requirements demanded aircraft with a faster rate of climb. It was therefore requested that, as BMW 801 D engines were expected to be available by 10 June 1942, the A-1 and A-2 sub-types



ABOVE AND RIGHT:
Factory personnel
handing over the first
Fw 190 A-1s to II./JG 26
in the late Summer of
1941. Although captions
to similar photographs
have stated they were
taken at Le Bourget, an
RAF interrogation report
on a pilot from JG 26
points out that the
Geschwader's first
aircraft were collected
from Hamburg, though
this was probably the
Focke-Wulf factory at
Bremen, approximately
60 miles away. Since
these are brand new
machines, it is obvious
that the yellow panel
under the cowling and
the brown Gruppe bar,
visible on the machines
nearest the camera in
both photographs, and
almost certainly also the
brown numerals of
6./JG 26, were applied at
the factory.

1. Behrens was later appointed *Typenbegleiter* for the Me 262, and did much to resolve the problems with that revolutionary aircraft.
2. *Niederschrift über die Besprechung beim JG 26 in Le Bourget am 2 September 1941.*
3. *Erfahrungsbericht über die Fw 190 A-1, A-2, A-3* dated 1 June 1942.

The first Fw 190 combat loss occurred on 18 September when the *Kommandeur* of II./JG 26, *Hptm.* Walter Adolph, then with 25 victories and a holder of the *Ritterkreuz*, was shot down by a Spitfire during a dogfight over the Channel. His body was later washed up on the Belgian coast. Adolph was replaced by Joachim Müncheberg whose 7./JG 26 had recently returned from the Mediterranean theatre where, during a seven month period of operations over Malta and Libya, the *Staffel's* pilots had claimed 52 aerial victories without loss before rejoining III./JG 26 at Ligescourt to re-equip with the Bf 109F-4. On 29 August, Müncheberg had claimed a Spitfire as his 50th victory, and the day following the death of *Hptm.* Adolph, *Oblt.* Müncheberg was promoted to *Hauptmann* and given command of II. *Gruppe*.

Another successful pilot on the Channel Front in 1941 was *Oblt.* Johannes Schmid who flew with the *Geschwaderstab* of JG 26 and claimed his 24th victory on 24 August, for which he received the *Ritterkreuz*. At the same time he was promoted to *Hauptmann* and became *Staffelkapitän* of 8./JG 26. *Hptm.* Schmid claimed his 30th victory on 7 September and continued to increase his tally, sometimes with multiple kills, and claimed two Spitfires on 21 September, three on the 27th and another three on 3 October which brought his score to 40 victories.

On 27 September, the whole of JG 2 and JG 26 with an establishment of 248 aircraft, were in Northern France; I./JG 52, still with an establishment of 40 aircraft, remained in the Low Countries; and the *Geschwader Stab* and I./JG 1 were in Germany with an establishment of 44 aircraft. The *Geschwader Stab* and I./JG 53 had arrived in the Low Countries from the Eastern Front in September to replace JG 52 which then moved to Russia in October. In mid-October, *Stab* and I./JG 53 were joined by II./JG 53, but operations mainly consisted of coastal patrols and were largely uneventful. However, on 25 October, a flying accident resulted in the loss of the *Kommandeur* of I./JG 53, the celebrated escaper and *Ritterkreuzträger* *Hptm.* Franz von Werra. The 21-victory ace took off from Katwijk on a routine flight but disappeared when his aircraft



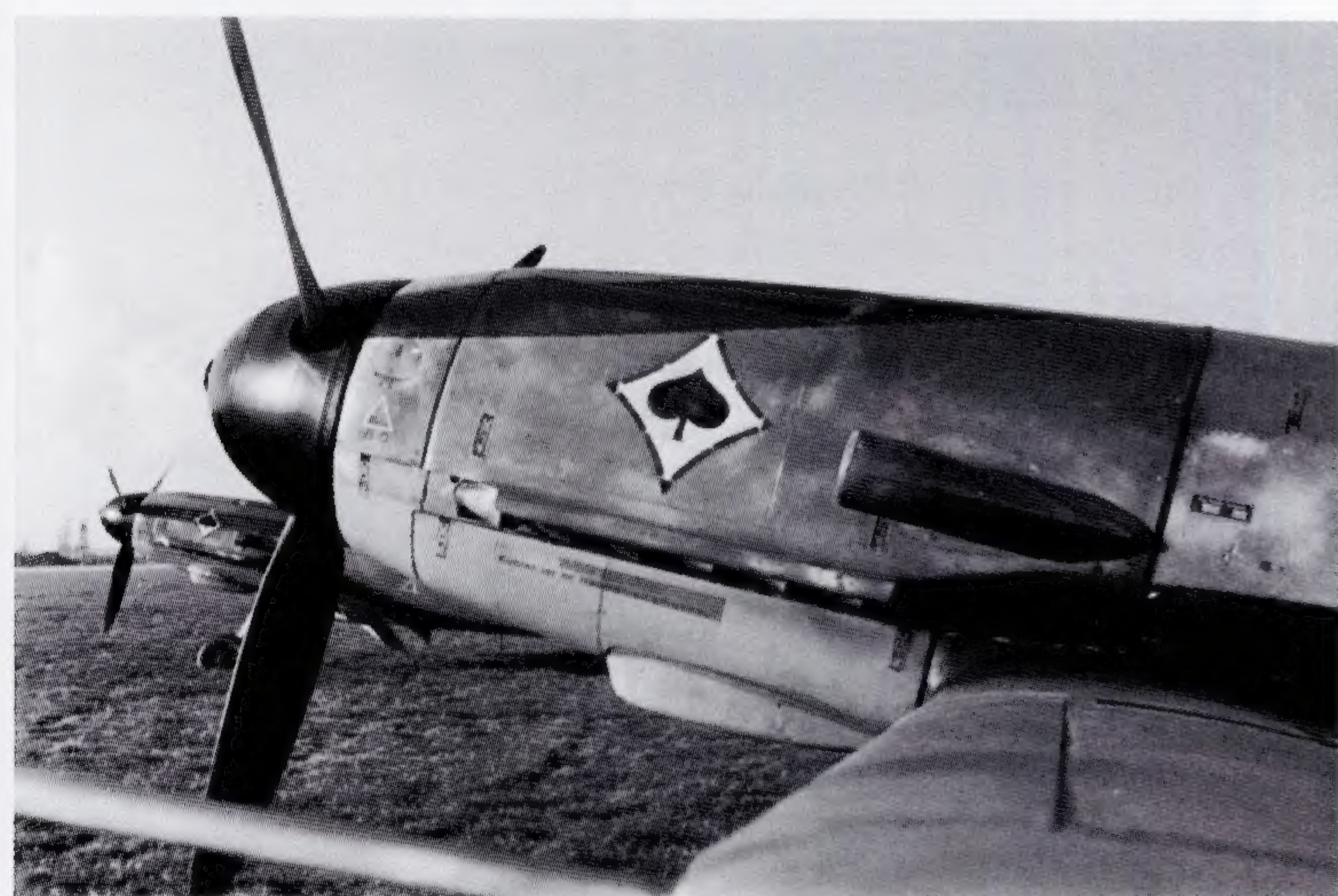
ABOVE: At the end of August 1941, 7./JG 26, then in North Africa under the command of *Oblt.* Joachim Müncheberg, began to return to the Channel coast. Müncheberg himself was one of the first pilots to arrive back in France and is seen here with (centre foreground) *Feldmarschall* Hugo Sperrle, AOC Luftflotte 3. Müncheberg flew his first sortie after returning to France on 26 August, during which he shot down a Spitfire.

inexplicably dived into the sea. He was eventually replaced by *Major* Herbert Kaminski. By mid-December, the last parts of JG 53 had departed for the Mediterranean and its area of operations was taken over by JG 1.

Meanwhile, the *Jagdwaaffe* continued to inflict high losses on the RAF's 'Circuses' and rendered them particularly costly. On 7 August especially, Fighter Command lost 14 fighters, followed by another 15 on the 19th and 21 August and 15 more on 21 September. A turning point finally occurred on 8 November when, during an RAF 'Circus' against Lille, pilots of JG 2 were credited with ten Spitfires and JG 26 with at least another ten. True Spitfire losses were 17, but the operation was nevertheless considered too costly

and, in view of the earlier losses and the additional problem of deteriorating weather and shorter days, the RAF Air Staff decided to restrict the scale of Fighter Command's operations. By this time, operations were in any case unlikely to affect the situation in Russia and the growing demands from other theatres of war called for a conservation of fighter resources which would not have been possible if the scale of operations was maintained at the level of the previous months. Occasional 'Circus' operations were still undertaken to keep the German defences on the alert, but no more large, escorted daylight raids were attempted until the Spring and the main burden of the RAF offensive was carried out by small numbers of aircraft attacking shipping and fringe targets on as wide a front as possible.

BELOW: Early Bf 109 Fs of JG 53. Between September and December 1941, the *Geschwader Stab*, I. and II. *Gruppe* of the 'Ace of Spades' *Geschwader* were stationed in the Low Countries to protect the North Sea coastline.



On 17 November, *Generaloberst* Ernst Udet, *Generalluftzeugmeister* of the *Luftwaffe*, committed suicide and the most highly-decorated members of the *Luftwaffe*, including Galland and Mölders, were ordered to the state funeral in Berlin. Mölders, then the *Inspekteur der Jagdflieger*, abandoned a tour of fighter units on the Eastern Front but was killed in a flying accident while returning to Germany. Almost immediately, Göring appointed Galland as Mölders' successor and on 6 December, *Major* Gerhard Schöpfel replaced the newly-promoted Galland as *Kommodore* of JG 26.

On 7 December, the Japanese attacked the American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor and, four days later, Hitler declared war on the US. This action was later to have a far-reaching effect on the air war over occupied Europe, but for the time being it was clear that the *Luftwaffe*, although greatly outnumbered, had inflicted heavy casualties and the RAF fighter offensive had failed either to destroy a large number of German fighters or draw them from other, more important, theatres of war. Furthermore, the RAF had overestimated the effectiveness of the bombing of industrial targets and airfields and too high a proportion of Allied pilots had been lost in relation to German fighter losses.

British claims were often still greatly exaggerated, the RAF claiming the destruction of 731 German fighters between 14 June 1941 and the end of the year, whereas the actual number destroyed according to German records was only 103. Moreover, this result was obtained at a cost of 411 Fighter Command pilots ² so that for every aircraft that the RAF destroyed, it was losing on average four of its own pilots. Thus, at the end of 1941,

the RAF's optimistic intention of inflicting considerable losses on the enemy by forcing him to fight when at a tactical disadvantage was far from being realised.

Despite the *Luftwaffe's* success against the RAF, flying accidents and operational losses claimed some of its most experienced pilots. On 6 November, *Hptm.* Johannes

LEFT: Another RAF pilot to lose both legs in a flying accident was Colin Hodgkinson. In 1938, Hodgkinson was accepted for pilot training in the Fleet Air Arm but, while practising blind flying, he collided with another aircraft and crashed, resulting in the amputation of both legs. Determined to fly again, by the Autumn of 1942 Hodgkinson had left the Royal Navy and joined the RAF as a Pilot Officer. He served briefly with 131 Squadron and then successively with 610 and 510 Squadrons before joining 611 Squadron in June 1943. Although he called himself "the poor man's Bader" Hodgkinson had no cause to cast himself as an understudy and succeeded in overcoming bouts of claustrophobia and an admitted fear of flying and combat. He also had a horror of being forced to ditch in the Channel and on one occasion filled his hollow legs with ping-pong balls, hoping they would keep him afloat. Later, at 30,000 ft, he was startled by the sound of gunfire and took violent evasive action before realising that the noise was the ping-pong balls exploding at altitude. In August 1943 Hodgkinson was posted to 501 Squadron as a flight commander but in November his oxygen system failed during a high altitude weather reconnaissance flight and he crashed into a French field. Badly injured, and minus one of his artificial legs, he was rescued from the wreckage of his Spitfire by two farm workers before being taken into captivity. He was repatriated ten months later and continued his war-time flying as a member of an aircraft ferry unit. Following his release from RAF service in 1949 he returned to military flying with the Royal Auxiliary Air Force where he remained until the early 1950s. Credited with two confirmed victories over Fw 190s, Colin Hodgkinson died in September 1996.



ABOVE AND BELOW: The RAF's policy of wearing down the *Luftwaffe* and forcing the withdrawal of units from the Russian Front was not achieved and Fighter Command suffered high losses. One notable British loss occurred during Circus 68 on 9 August 1941 when the well-known Tangmere Wing Leader, W/Cdr. Douglas Bader, who had lost his legs in a pre-war flying accident, was forced to abandon his Spitfire over the French coast after colliding with a Bf 109, possibly that flown by Uffz. Albert Schlager of 3./JG26. After being captured, Bader was entertained by Adolf Galland and members of JG 26 at Audembert (**ABOVE**) and allowed to inspect one of the unit's Bf 109 Fs at close quarters (**BELOW**).



2. During the whole of the Battle of Britain, 10 July 1940 - 31 October 1940, the number of Fighter Command pilots lost was 448.

Schmid of 8./JG 26 accounted for his 45th victory, a Spitfire which plunged into the sea off Calais, and was circling the water where his victim had disappeared but was killed when the wingtip of his Bf 109 F touched the surface and crashed. Similarly, on 22 December, five pilots of 6./JG 26 were killed when they flew into a hill, one being the *Staffelkapitän*, *Oblt.* Walter Schneider who had 16 victories.



ABOVE: The first fully-operational Staffel to receive the Fw 190 was 6./JG 26 under Oblt Walter Schneider, seen here with the rudder of his 'Brown 1', an Fw 190 A-1 W. Nr. 027.

RIGHT: 'Brown 4', seen here at Morseele in the Autumn of 1941, was an early Fw 190 A-1 delivered to 6./JG 26. It was later transferred to 7./JG 26 where it became 'White 3' and was written off on 29 April 1942 when it collided with another of the Staffel's aircraft, both pilots being killed. Note the demarcation line between the uppersurface camouflage colours on the machine in the foreground and the imperfections in the black part of the wing Balkenkreuz.



LEFT: The Fw 190 A was sturdier, more manoeuvrable and more heavily armed than the Bf 109 F, and its wide-track undercarriage was stronger and provided greater stability on the ground than the narrow undercarriage of the Bf 109 series. Despite its overheating problems, a major advantage of the Fw 190 was that its radial engine was air-cooled and did not require a vulnerable liquid cooling system.



RIGHT: Ground staff of 5./JG 26 running up the engine of 'Black 1', an early-production Fw 190 A-1, at Morseele. This particular machine, W.Nr. 033, later served with 6./JG 26 and was one of the aircraft crashed into a hill near Boulogne during a transfer flight from Wevengem to Abbeville-Drucat on 22 December 1941. The pilot, Ofw. Kurt Görbig, had become lost in fog and was killed. Note the area of dark-coloured paint behind the exhausts which was designed to protect this area from the hot gasses and helped conceal carbon deposits.





ABOVE: Ground staff manoeuvring an Fw 190 A-1 coded 'Black 13' at Moorsele in the Autumn of 1941. This machine, W.Nr. 100, was one of the first Fw 190 A-1s in service and was assigned to Lt. Horst Sternberg of 5./JG 26.

RIGHT:
Lt. Sternberg in
conversation at
Moorsele. The
Luftwaffe
Kriegsbericht
cuff title on the
sleeve of the
Flieger leaning on
the tailplane of
W.Nr. 100
indicates that he
is a war
correspondent.



ABOVE, INSET AND RIGHT:
Lt. Sternberg in the cockpit of
'Black 13' at Wevelgem on
25 November 1941 and (RIGHT)
taxiing for take-off. At this time,
Sternberg had four victories, all
Spitfires. On 3 January 1943, by
which time his tally had increased
to 10 victories, Sternberg was
promoted to Staffelkapitän of the
5. Staffel, a position he retained
until he was shot down and killed
by a P-47 on 22 February 1944.





THIS PAGE: Taken at various times in the Autumn of 1941, these views show 'White 1', a Bf 109 F-2, W.Nr. 7205, flown by the Staffelkapitän of 1./JG 26, Oblt. Josef Priller. In the photograph (TOP LEFT), members of Priller's ground staff pose with the rudder of his machine marked with 55 victories, the latest claimed on 21 October 1941. (ABOVE) On 8 November, Priller (seen second left) shot down a Spitfire as his 57th victory, and in the photograph (LEFT) he is seen at St. Omer-Arques on 25 November being filmed by a Propaganda Kompanie cameraman.

Messerschmitt Bf 109 F-2, 'White 1', flown by Oblt. Josef Priller, Staffelkapitän of 1./JG 26, France, October 1941

Camouflaged in an RLM 74/75/76 scheme, Oblt. Priller's aircraft is shown here marked with 55 victory bars on the rudder, as it appeared following Priller's victory over a Spitfire on 21 October 1941. Note that, as may be seen in the accompanying photographs, Priller's personal emblem, an ace of hearts with the name 'Jutta' added to the centre, was applied under the cockpit on both sides of the fuselage. The W.Nr. 7205 appeared on the fin.



Priller's personal emblem





THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE: These photographs were taken during and immediately after the change-of-command ceremony at Audembert on 5 December 1941 when Oberst Adolf Galland, ordered to succeed Werner Mölders as General der Jagdflieger, handed over command of JG 26 to Major Gerhard Schöpfel. Showing a keen interest in the aircraft is Reichsmarschall Göring who, although not expected at the ceremony, arrived in order to pay tribute to Galland's leadership and to the successes of the Geschwader. The aircraft are two of the three Bf 109 Fs which Galland had modified because he thought the F-version was under-armed. All three of the modified machines retained their standard engine-mounted MG 151/20 cannon but two had been fitted with two 12.7mm MG 131s in the cowling, while the third retained the standard MG 17 armament but also had an MG FF cannon in each wing. The aircraft on this page has the two MG FF cannon in the wings, just visible in the photograph (TOP LEFT) and a smooth engine cowl. Note the Mickey Mouse emblem on this machine faces aft.





LEFT AND BELOW: The aircraft shown here is one of the two machines modified to carry MG 131s in the upper engine cowlings. Note the blisters covering the gun breaches and ammunition feeds and that the blast troughs are deeper and wider than for the standard MG 17 armament.

Messerschmitt Bf 109 F-2/U flown by Obst. Adolf Galland, Kommodore of JG 26, France, early December 1941
As noted above, this aircraft featured non-standard armament over the engine which necessitated the additional fairings and enlarged blast troughs visible in the accompanying photograph. It was camouflaged in a standard RLM 74/75/75 scheme with a yellow rudder and identification panel under the nose, but featured darker areas on the forward fuselage where the modified panels had been fitted. The Mickey Mouse emblem on the side of this aircraft faced forwards and the Stab symbols and rudder markings on all three modified aircraft are believed to have been identical to those shown opposite.



Galland's Mickey Mouse Emblem

RIGHT: An Fw 190 A-2 photographed on an airfield in France in February 1942. The W.Nr. 20 228 on the fin identifies this aircraft as being 'Yellow 1' of 9./JG 2, and this view shows well the three-tone Grey 74/75/76 colour scheme and the Green 70 on the propeller blades and spinner. The bright sunlight has illuminated the rudder which was painted the same bright Yellow 04 as the panel under the engine.



ABOVE: Fw 190 A-3s of JG 2 on the Channel Front. The aircraft furthest from the camera are from 8./JG 2, while the machine in the foreground, 'Yellow 3', is thought to have been flown by Ofw. Josef Wurmheller of 9./JG 2.

RIGHT: Ofw. Wurmheller and Major Oesau. The machine in the background, 'Yellow 3', is evidently another of Wurmheller's aircraft as the fuselage camouflage is mottled and the design of the black flash over the area of the exhaust is different from that shown above.





ABOVE: Three Fw 190 A-2s of 5./JG 2 begin their take-off run from the airfield at Beaumont-le-Roger in early April 1942. Note that the aircraft on the left, coded 'Black 8', is believed to have been the machine later assigned to Oblt. Wilhelm-Ferdinand 'Wutz' Galland, the Staffelkapitän of 5./JG 26.



LEFT: Another view of 'Black 8', now at Abbeville in mid-1942, showing that not all operational Fw 190s of this period were heavily adorned with unit emblems or victory markings, although at this time the pilot, Wilhelm-Ferdinand Galland, had 10 victories.

RIGHT: "Wutz" Galland, one of Adolf Galland's younger brothers, joined a Luftwaffe flak regiment in 1935 before later volunteering for training as a fighter pilot. On completion of his training with the Ergänzungsgruppe/JG 26, he joined II./JG 26 on 27 June 1941. At that time, JG 26 was under the command of his brother Adolf and his younger brother Paul was also serving with the Geschwader. Assigned to 6./JG 26, Oblt. "Wutz" Galland recorded his first victory on the evening of 23 July 1941, shooting down a Spitfire north of Hesdin, and by the end of the year had three confirmed victories, all Spitfires. On 5 May 1942, he was appointed Staffelkapitän of 5./JG 26 and by the end of the year his score stood at 21 confirmed victories. On 3 January 1943, now promoted to Hauptmann, "Wutz" Galland took command of II./JG 26 and on 28 January he received the Deutsches Kreuz in Gold for 24 victories, followed on 18 May 1943 by the Ritterkreuz, awarded for the destruction of 35 enemy aircraft. On 17 August 1943, II./JG 26 took off to intercept B-17s returning from an attack on Schweinfurt. Finding a large force of these bombers near Liège, Galland - now a Major - led his fighters in to the attack but they were bounced by P-47s which, in their first pass, shot down Galland's Fw 190 A-5 plus two others. Galland's aircraft was seen to crash near Liège, west of Maastricht. In 186 missions in the West, Wilhelm Ferdinand "Wutz" Galland had achieved 54 victories including seven heavy bombers and no fewer than 37 Spitfires.



RIGHT: This Fw 190 A-1 of 6./JG 26, W.Nr. 013, was coded 'Brown 13' and was flown by Uffz. Gerhard Vogt, who joined the 6. Staffel as an Obergefreiter in September 1941 and claimed his first victory, a Spitfire, on 6 November. On 24 March 1942, when Vogt had two victories, this aircraft was badly damaged in combat with a Spitfire, and although Uffz. Vogt was slightly wounded, he managed to return to Abbeville where he made a forced landing. Later commissioned, Gerhard Vogt reached the rank of Oberleutnant and led several Staffeln of JG 26, including the 4. Staffel, with which unit he was killed on 14 January 1945. By the time of his death, Vogt had been wounded in action on eight occasions and had 48 victories.



Focke-Wulf Fw 190 A-1; W.Nr. 013, 'Brown 13', flown by Uffz. Gerhard Vogt of 6./JG 26, Moorseele Autumn 1941

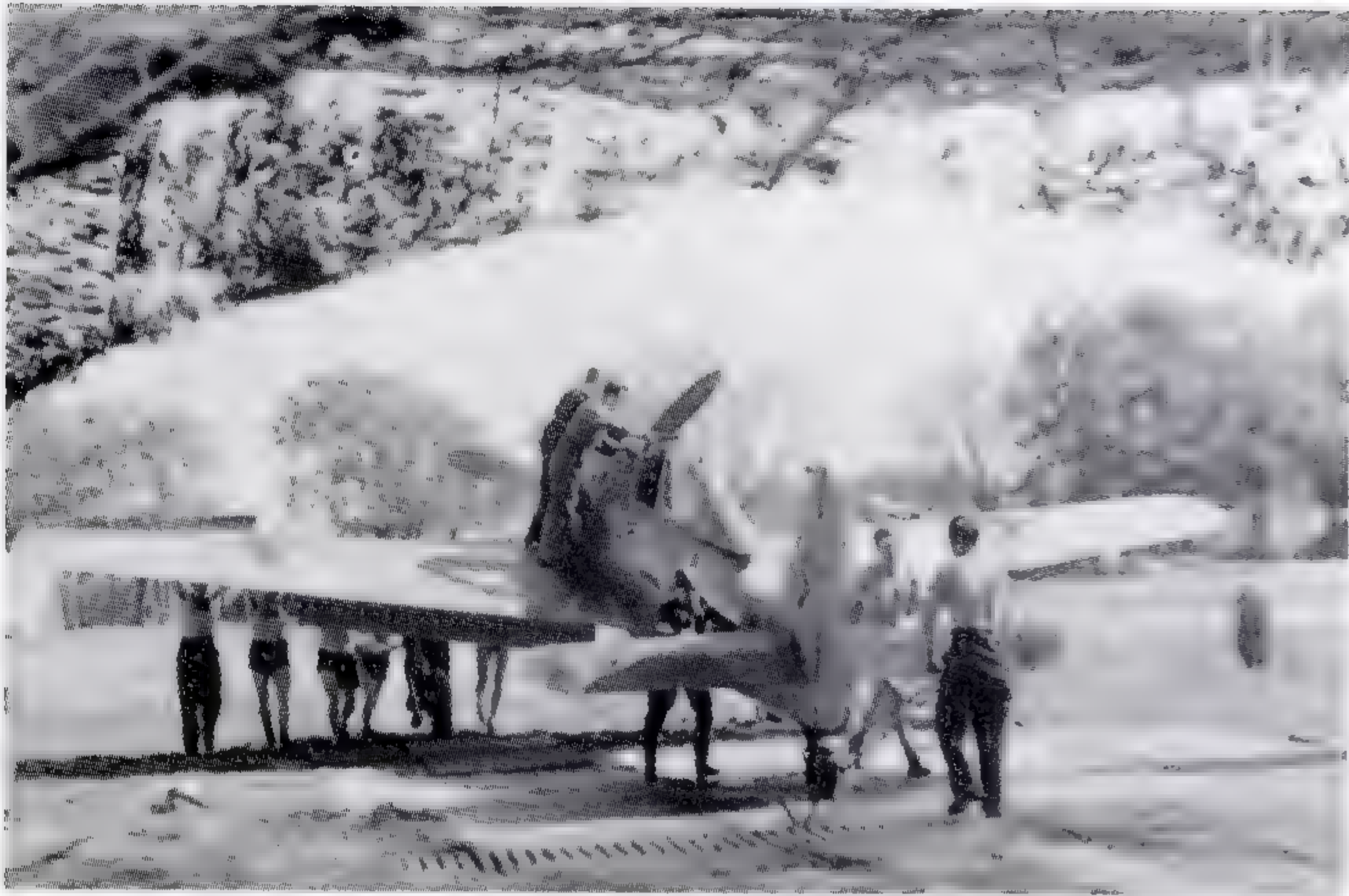
This aircraft was camouflaged in RLM 02 and 71 on the upper surfaces with these colours covering more of the frontal nose area than normally seen. The undersurfaces were painted RLM 76 and the machine carried standard yellow identification markings. Note the fuselage sides have heavy exhaust staining which resulted in some units painting the exhaust area black. Although the aircraft is depicted before Uffz. Vogt claimed his first victory, the rudder was probably later painted with two black bars to indicate the pilot's victories up to the time the machine was damaged.



BELOW: An Fw 190 A-2 of II./JG 26 taxiing at Abbeville in 1942.



ABOVE: Although similar to W.Nr. 013 shown above, this aircraft had slight variations in the camouflage and the positioning of the fuselage number, too, is also different. Since W.Nr. 013 is known to have been damaged in March 1942, this machine is not, therefore, believed to be the same aircraft, although it was possibly flown by the same pilot and the four or five black victory bars on the rudder represent Uffz. Vogt's victory tally in May or June 1942.



THIS PAGE: Although members of the Geschwaderstab of JG 26 had aircraft with personalised markings, they were not always flown by the pilot to whom the aircraft was specifically allocated. For example, although the Fw 190 A-2 being pushed under camouflage netting (*ABOVE LEFT*) was actually allocated to Oblt. Wilfried Sieling, the Geschwaderadjutant of JG 26, it is shown here (*ABOVE RIGHT AND BELOW*) with the Geschwaderkommodore, Major Gerhard Schöpfel, sitting in the cockpit at Audembert in early 1942. Sieling was killed by a Spitfire on 30 April 1942, at which time he was flying Ofw. Bruno Hegenauer's Fw 190 A-2, shown on Page 20.



Focke-Wulf Fw 190 A-2 flown by Oblt. Wilfried Sieling of Stab/JG 26, France, early 1942

Oblt. Sieling's aircraft was camouflaged in the RLM colours 74/75/76 with a mottle of 74 and 75 extending down the fuselage sides. A decoratively finished area of black paint edged in white was applied to the exhaust area to disguise the exhaust staining, although at the time some of the above photographs were taken it had already started to burn away in the hottest areas. The spinner on this machine was also painted black.





LEFT: This Fw 190 A-2, W.Nr. 20202 at Sitzbereitschaft, was assigned to Ofw. Bruno Hegenauer of Stab/JG 26 who sometimes flew as Kaczmarek to the Kommodore, Major Schöpfel. The function of a Kaczmarek, or wingman, was to cover his leader so that he, the leader, could concentrate on attacking enemy aircraft without worrying about what was happening behind him. A good wingman like Hegenaur, who had earlier flown as Adolf Galland's wingman, would, therefore, only rarely have an opportunity to attack enemy aircraft himself, and as far as is known, during his time with JG 26, Hegenauer was only awarded one confirmed kill, a Spitfire shot down on 14 April 1942. At that time, Hegenauer was a Hauptmann. On 30 April, this aircraft was being flown by Oblt. Wilfried Sieling, also of the Geschwaderstab, when it was attacked by a Spitfire. Sieling was killed and the aircraft destroyed.

Focke-Wulf Fw 190 A-2 flown by Ofw. Bruno Hegenauer of Stab/JG 26, France, 1942

Apart from the Stab markings, which included the first letters of the pilot's surname, painted on the fuselage of this machine, it was otherwise finished in standard 74/75/76 camouflage and yellow identification markings. Note, however, that the uppersurface colours on the fuselage extend down the fuselage sides before fading out in a soft mid-demarcation line.



July 1941-August 1943

LEFT: An interesting and unusual variation in Stab markings, as seen on a Bf 109 F of JG 2.



RIGHT: The flight line at Beaumont-le-Roger, probably in the early Spring of 1942, showing a Bf 109 F of Stab/JG 2 in non-standard Stab markings.

BELOW: Another view of the same Bf 109 F of JG 2 taken later in 1942. The identity of the pilot of this aircraft is not known for certain, although some sources believe it may have been one of the aircraft flown by Oblt. Rudolf Pflanz. Interestingly, however, identical markings are known to have been carried on an Fw 190 allocated to Lt. Hubert von Greim, son of Generalfeldmarschall Robert Ritter von Greim who, in the last weeks of the war replaced Göring as Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe.





ABOVE: This Fw 190 A-5, W.Nr. 2628, is thought to be another machine which was originally operated by Stab/JG 2 although it is shown here at Lyon in November 1942 while being used by Jagdlehrerüberprüfungs Staffel Bernay, an examination unit for fighter instructors. The aircraft eventually returned to JG 2 but was destroyed during an air battle on 16 August 1943 while serving with 3. Staffel. The pilot, Fw. Wilhelm Utz, was killed.

RIGHT: JG 26's ground crew servicing an Fw 190 A-4 marked with the double chevrons of an as yet unidentified Gruppenkommandeur.



ABOVE: Non-standard Stab markings on an Fw 190 of Stab II./JG 26 as it takes off from Abbeville in early 1942.



ABOVE: From 1941 to at least September 1943, the Geschwaderstab of JG 26 used a system of markings based on the first letter of the pilot's surname, hence the letter 'G' applied to the fuselage of this Fw 190 A-2 flown by Hptm. Wilhelm Gäth. This photograph shows the aircraft as it taxis onto a wooden pathway laid down to prevent the machine from becoming stuck in soft ground, probably in the Spring of 1942.



LEFT: Hptm. Wilhelm Gäth remained with the Geschwaderstab of JG 26 until 16 March 1943 when he left to take up a new appointment as Staffelfkapitän of 2./JG 26. In this later photograph, believed taken in April or May 1943, Gäth's surplus aircraft has been borrowed by Major Priller who flew it during a visit to III./JG 26 at Wevelgem.

Focke-Wulf Fw 190 A-2 flown by Hptm. Wilhelm Gäth of Geschwaderstab JG 26, Spring 1942

The areas to either side of the Balkenkreuz on this Fw 190 A-2, finished in RLM 74/75/76 camouflage, have probably been repainted and the camouflage has been extended to cover the complete sides of the fuselage in a low-demarcation scheme. Most of the repainting seems to consist of a series of sprayed mottles and streaks, although there are also some hard-edged hand-painted areas. It would seem that the exhaust outlet area on this aircraft did not have the usual protective paint.





ABOVE: Technical personnel of 7./JG 2 preparing to refuel 'White 12,' an Fw 190 A-2, W.Nr. 2194, at Théville. Clearly visible is the large, black stylised eagle of III./JG 2 on the forward fuselage. The rudder and the panel beneath the engine were yellow.

RIGHT: Ground staff attending to the Fw 190 A-2 normally flown by Ofw. Ludwig Hartmann of 9./JG 2. Taken at Théville in May 1942, this photograph again shows the full eagle design applied to the forward fuselage and cowling of some of III. Gruppe's aircraft. Also visible in this view is the yellow '2' and vertical III. Gruppe bar, as well as Hartmann's ten white victory bars on the yellow rudder.



German Fighter Counter-Offensives

Although the main efforts of JG 2 and JG 26 in 1941 were concentrated on defending the Channel coast, the return of more favourable weather at the beginning of 1941 allowed these units to resume the fighter sweeps and low-level fighter-bomber attacks which had been a feature of *Jagdwa* activity over Southern England in November 1940. However, whereas the main targets for the 1940 attacks had been RAF airfields, the new series of attacks was directed against coastal towns. These attacks, which became known as hit-and-run raids, were on a much smaller scale than those of 1940, and were usually conducted by one or two *Schwärme* (i.e. four to eight aircraft). No fighter escort was provided and pilots relied for protection on speed, surprise and their extreme low-level approach, but these tactics were extremely effective and presented the RAF with a difficult interception problem.

This problem had still not been solved when, on 10 November 1941, *Jafü* 2 and *Jafü* 3 were ordered to put up one *Jabo*, or fighter-bomber *Staffel* from each of their subordinate fighter *Geschwader*, and the establishment of these specialised *Staffeln* marked the renewal of fighter-bomber activity against Britain and coastal traffic in the Channel. The first of these units, *Jabo Staffel*/JG 2, was formed in January 1942 under *Oblt.* Frank Liesendahl and was followed a few weeks later by the formation of *Jabo Staffel*/JG 26 under *Hptm.* Karl Plunser. Both units were equipped with the Bf 109 F-4/B fitted with a fuselage rack for four SC50 bombs or, more usually, a single SC 250. Pilots were sought who had gained some previous fighter-bomber experience in the latter stages of the Battle of Britain.

As if to emphasise the problem the British defences faced in intercepting low-level raiders in bad weather, two fighters had appeared off the Sussex coast on Christmas Day 1941 and opened fire on buildings at Fairlight near Hastings. This attack marked the real beginning of the low-level fighter-bomber campaign of 1942 when the German fighter forces turned again to the offensive, and in the first three months of the year the fighters and fighter-bombers of JG 2 and JG 26 carried out 31 machine gun attacks against towns and villages on the South Coast. These raids, usually carried out at low altitude and often in conditions of poor visibility, were so difficult to intercept that in the same period the British defences claimed only six aircraft destroyed overland by day.

Moreover, the effort Fighter Command expended to intercept these raiders was out of all proportion to the damage caused. In the first three months of 1942, Fighter Command flew 4,677 interception patrols and 10,918 shipping patrols, yet the *Luftwa*, for the greater part of this period, still retained no more than a holding force in the West. On 3 January 1942, for example, the number of *Luftwa* bombers available for use against Britain was 274, and of these only 146 were serviceable. However, this small force more than justified its existence on military grounds as altogether, 1,478 aircraft, 6,000 guns and almost a million men and women of the Army and RAF stood by to meet the threat of air attack.³ The German holding campaign in the West was, therefore, certainly meeting with some success and, for the RAF, the problems of intercepting the hit-and-run raiders essentially turned on the difficulty of providing adequate warning of its approach. The normal radar early warning station was limited by its visual range, but at the beginning of 1942 another type of special low-looking radar, known as Chain Home Extra Low, or CHEL, was being developed.

By the beginning of 1942, the first-line establishment of JG 2 and JG 26 in France had increased by just 40 aircraft in six months. The whole of JG 2 was still equipped entirely with the Bf 109 F but the conversion of JG 26 to the Fw 190 was well under way and with the exception of part of II. *Gruppe* and the *Ergänzungsgruppe*, the *Geschwader* had almost completely converted to the Fw 190. Further north, the defence of Holland and Northern Europe, including Norway, was entrusted to JG 1 which, in January 1942, was increased to full *Geschwader* strength with the formation of II., III. and IV./JG 1. At first, the area remained fairly quiet and JG 1's first major action did not occur until the afternoon of 7 February when parts of the *Geschwader* intercepted a force of 32 Hampden bombers laying mines off the Friesian Islands. Three Hampdens were lost, all claimed by *Ofw.* Detlev Lüth of 4./JG 1, bringing his victory total to 29. JG 1 was in action again on 12 February, when, together with JG 2 and JG 26, it provided aerial protection during Operation 'Donnerkeil', the so-called 'Channel Dash', when the *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau* and *Prinz Eugen* sailed up the English Channel from Brest to German ports.

3. 90,400 air and ground staff, 60,743 officers and men of the balloon barrage, 280,000 men and 170,000 ATS (to crew the 1,920 heavy AA, 981 light AA guns, 2,776 Lewis guns and 358 rocket projectors) of AA Command and 391,000 men and women employed in full-time civil defence duties.

Operation 'Donnerkeil' – Protecting the Channel Dash

"...the weather actually occurred as forecast, even if it was about from six to eight hours late. But it saved us."

Adolf Galland commenting post-war on the outcome of the Channel Dash.

For most of 1941, the German battleships *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* and heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen* were all but stranded in Brest, where they were in constant danger from the RAF. To safeguard the ships and to protect Norway from any possible British invasion, Hitler ordered that the ships were to be brought back to Germany in a quick dash up the Channel.

German preparations for the operation were excellent; passages were swept through minefields and marked so that the ships and their escort could sail at top speed, and permanent air protection was arranged with the *Luftwaffe*. The organisation and supervision of this fighter protection was one of the earliest responsibilities for Adolf Galland in his new position as *General der Jagdflieger*. The ships were due to sail under cover of darkness on the night of 11 February and the fighter protection, arranged under the code-name Operation 'Donnerkeil', was planned with such secrecy that even the leaders of the *Gruppen* involved were only made aware of the true purpose of the operation on the evening of the 10th.

For the operation, Galland had at his disposal the full operational strength of the three western-based *Jagdgeschwader* – a total of some 250 single-engined fighters – plus a small number of Bf 110 night-fighters. As a reserve, 12 aircraft from the fighter school near Paris were mobilised and moved to the Pas de Calais where they were to be held ready should losses to the fighter force be greater than anticipated. Although the adverse weather forecast for the period would aid the escape, timing was crucial and the success of the fighter escort depended on three command centres established within separate *Jafü* boundaries parallel to the ships' course. Each centre controlled a succession of overlapping sectors in the English Channel and North Sea from Brest to the final posts of destination. To provide an element of local control, *Oberst* Max-Josef Ibel, the former *Geschwaderkommodore* of JG 27, embarked on *Scharnhorst* with a signals detachment as *Jafü Schiff*¹.

The three warships would be provided with a surface escort of five destroyers plus a flotilla of smaller vessels, and as the ships moved northwards, they would also be covered consecutively from the air by elements of JG 2, JG 26 and JG 1. Each *Geschwader* would provide successive groups of 16 fighters in four *Schwärme* operating under strict radio silence, which would remain with the ships for 30 minutes. Ten minutes before the end of their patrol time they were to be joined by the next group, so that for almost half of the daylight part of the operation, the ships would be protected by 32 fighters. JG 2 and JG 26 were responsible for protecting the ships through the narrow Straits of Dover, considered the most hazardous part of their voyage, with JG 1 taking over the aerial escort duties as the ships passed the Scheldt estuary.

The departure of the German ships, although delayed by more than three hours, took place as planned on the night of 11 February. The clearing of the channels in the minefields had been observed by the British who were therefore aware that preparations for some undertaking had begun, but three air patrols by Hudsons fitted with air-to-surface radar which had been organised to observe the waters off Brest failed to detect the ships and by first light on the morning of the 12th they were off Cherbourg where they were joined by their fighter escort. The first *Geschwader* on station was JG 2, soon joined by Bf 110 night-fighters, the Bf 109s of I./JG 26 and Fw 190s of II./JG 26, which provided a relay of fighters throughout

the morning. Still the ships remained undetected, but at 11.00 hrs British radar located a part of the escort circling above the ships and two Spitfires were ordered to investigate. Soon afterwards, the ships were seen and correctly identified by two other Spitfire pilots on a 'Rhubarb' mission, but they did not break radio silence and only reported them after landing. At about the same time however, the two Spitfires sent to investigate the British radar plot identified and reported the passage of the ships.



ABOVE: RAF Halifax bombers over Brest. Just visible in the dry docks on the left are the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*.

BELOW: A Schwarm of Bf 110 night-fighters from NJG 1 providing aerial cover during Operation 'Donnerkeil'.



The British response began some two hours later in the form of an ineffective salvo from the Dover gun batteries and was shortly followed by the first aerial attack when six Swordfish torpedo aircraft with an escort of 11 Spitfires was intercepted by the German fighters which also shot down all six of the Swordfish. Although this interception had taken place within the area assigned to JG 26, parts of JG 2 continued to assist JG 26 as, for more than three hours, successive formations of British aircraft braved the worsening weather in a series of abortive attacks against the ships.

As a result of the actions involving JG 2 and JG 26, claims were submitted for 35 British aircraft shot down in return for the reported loss of four aircraft and their pilots. JG 26 had scored well with *Oblt.* Johannes Naumann of the 9. *Staffel* claiming two of the six Swordfish shot down while *Lt.* Paul Galland gained his fourth victory by accounting for another, *Fw.* Adolf Glunz of the 4. *Staffel* raised his victory total to ten, claiming a Spitfire near Eu and *Fw.* Hans-Jürgen Fröhlich of the 2. *Staffel* claimed a Hampden off Ostend for his fifth victory.

Pilots of JG 2 were also successful, *Oblt.* Karl-Heinz Greisert, *Kommandeur* of II. *Gruppe*, *Oblt.* Rudolf Pflanz of 1./JG 2 and *Lt.* Horst-Benno Krüger of 5./JG 2 all claiming two victories each. Other victories were claimed by *Oblt.* Egon Mayer of 7. *Staffel* who shot down a Whirlwind, *Hptm.* Hans Hahn, *Kommandeur* of III. *Gruppe*, and *Oblt.* Siegfried Schnell of the 9. *Staffel* who claimed a Hampden off the Dutch coast.

The final clash of the day took place off the Dutch coast at about 16.30 hrs when, guided by coloured flares in the steadily worsening weather, elements of the recently formed II./JG 1 intercepted a force of bombers making for the ships. *Oblt.* Max Bucholz of the 5. *Staffel* claimed one as his 28th victory, *Oblt.* Eberhard Bock of 6./JG 1 claimed his 22nd and 23rd, *Fw.* Küpper, of the 5. *Staffel* his 13th, while *Oblt.* Diesselhorst and *Uffz.* Günter Kirchner, also of 5./JG 1 claimed one each. A claim for a seventh aircraft, a Blenheim, was shared between four pilots of 5./JG 1.

While the unfavourable weather along the ships' course had indeed greatly aided their escape, over Holland, it deteriorated to such an extent that fighter cover was almost suspended. In the event, the fighters took off and succeeded in completing their mission but, unable in many cases to return to their airfields because of the poor weather, landed with surprisingly few accidents on beaches, streets and fields.

Supported by the co-ordinated efforts of the *Luftwaffe* and *Kriegsmarine*, the air defence operation planned by Galland had worked almost flawlessly. Although *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* sustained damage from earlier laid mines, attacks from the air and by motor torpedo boats and destroyers all proved futile and the three ships reached port at Kiel and Wilhelmshaven on the morning of 13 February. In speaking post-war about the aerial protection provided for the Channel Dash, Galland referred to the operation as being the "greatest hour" of his wartime career.



ABOVE: A Rotte of Fw 190s from II./JG 26 flying over the warships.



LEFT: Viewed from aboard the Prinz Eugen, the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau steam in line astern through the English Channel.

The Luftwaffe Gains the Upper Hand

At the beginning of March 1942, the RAF daylight offensive which had been suspended in November due to high losses was revived, but with no new strategy it was compelled to return to the large and costly operations mounted during the latter half of 1941. Despite expectations that the renewal of the offensive would result in increased success, Fighter Command was affected by a decline in the level of combat skills within its squadrons as many of their experienced pilots were transferred to the Mediterranean or the Far East and were replaced by inexperienced pilots.

The first 'Circus' of 1942 was flown on the evening of 8 March with a two-pronged mission against targets at Commines and Poissy. This prompted a vigorous response from German fighters, during which *Fw.* Artur Beese and *Lt.* Gottfried Helmholtz of 1. and 2./JG 26 respectively each claimed their third victories, while *Fw.* Emil Babenz and *Lt.* Paul Schauder, both of 3./JG 26, each achieved their tenth victories. The following day, JG 26 claimed four more victories. Thus the air war over occupied Europe resumed with a recurrence of the previous year's operations and with the tactical initiative still firmly held by JG 2 and JG 26.

For *Luftwaffe* fighter forces on the Channel coast, their qualitative advantage in tactics and equipment was at its peak. As far as the German pilots were concerned, the valuable experiences gained at little cost in the aerial battles of 1941 had provided the opportunity for the average pilot to greatly improve his combat skills. Similarly, the introduction of the *Fw* 190 had provided the *Jagdwaaffe* with a fighter that was proving to be greatly superior in almost every respect to the RAF's Hurricanes, Spitfires and twin-engined Whirlwinds. The conversion of JG 2 to the *Fw* 190 had now begun although II. *Gruppe*, the first to convert, would not be operational until May and the *Geschwaderstabskette* mostly retained its *Bf* 109s until the late Summer. The various *Gruppen* of the *Geschwader* worked up on the new fighter throughout the Spring, but between mid-March and the end of May, 11 *Fw* 190s were damaged in accidents and two were destroyed killing their pilots, one being *Oblt.* Werner Stocklemann, *Staffelkapitän* of 9./JG 2 whose *Fw* 190 A-3 crashed at Théville during a familiarisation flight on 29 May. Just two days later, II./JG 2 experienced its first fatal *Fw* 190 combat loss when the A-2 of *Fw.* Waldemar Kipnich of the 5. *Staffel* was shot down in combat near Dieppe.



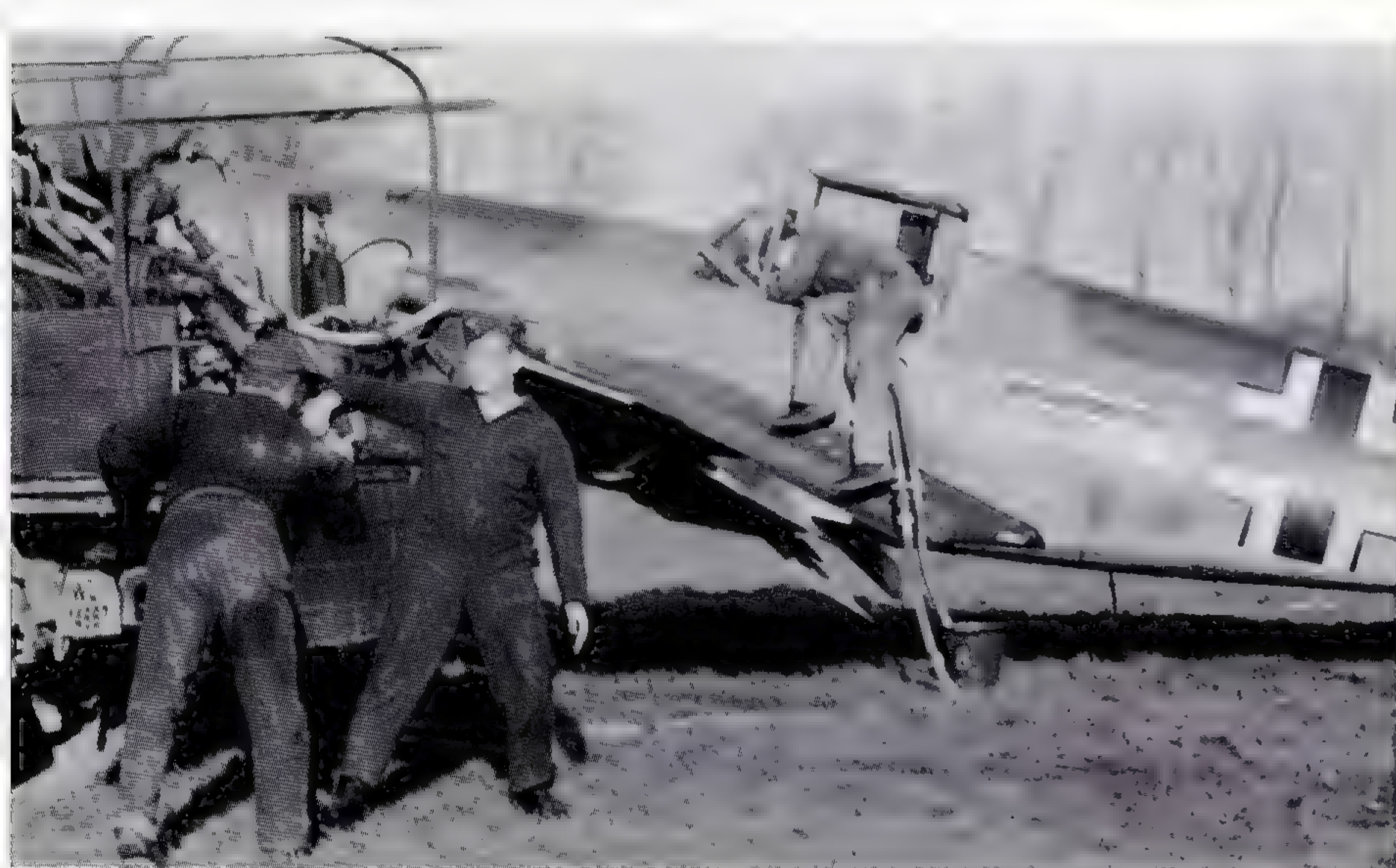
On the evening of 10 April 1942, Adolf Galland's two brothers, Wilhelm-Ferdinand with the 6./JG 26 and Paul (LEFT) with the 8./JG 26, both became five-victory 'Aces' when each downed a Spitfire near Etaples during an action against an RAF fighter sweep. Paul Galland, the youngest of the Galland brothers, recorded his tenth victory, a Spitfire near Calais, on 3 May. On 31 October 1942, *Lt.* Paul Galland took part in the *Jabo* raid on Canterbury and, on the return flight, answered a call for help from a German pilot under attack by a Spitfire. Seeing Galland approach, the Spitfire pilot pulled up into the cloud cover. Attempting to follow the Spitfire, Galland stalled his *Fw* 190A-4 'Black 1' and had to dive away to regain speed. Seizing this opportunity, the RAF pilot dived from the clouds and shot Galland down, his aircraft crashing in flames into the Channel west of Calais. At the time of his death, *Lt.* Paul Galland was credited with 17 victories in 107 combat missions.

RIGHT:
In February 1942, II./JG 2, then equipped with the *Bf* 109 F, began to receive the *Fw* 190, the first examples going to 6. *Staffel* at Beaumont-le-Roger. Parked behind 'Yellow 2', W.Nr. 5216, are 'Yellow 10' and Yellow 3', all *Fw* 190 A-2s. 'Yellow 2' was lost during the air battle over Dieppe on 19 August 1942 and its pilot, *Uffz.* Günter Geguns, posted missing. At the time of this photograph, possibly taken in April 1942, parts of the *Geschwader* still retained the *Bf* 109 F and the tail of a *Gruppenstab* machine is visible bottom left.



20 June 1942

Stab/JG 1	Bf 109 F	1	(0)	Jever	Jafü Deutsche Bucht
I./JG 1	Bf 109 F	41	(33)	Jever	Jafü Deutsche Bucht
II./JG 1	FW 190	39	(28)	Woensdrecht	Jafü Holland/Ruhr
III./JG 1	Bf 109 F	33	(27)	Husum	Jafü Deutsche Bucht
Part IV./JG 1	Bf 109 F	30	(21)	Bergen-op-Zoom	Jafü Holland/Ruhr
Stab/JG 2	Bf 109 F	4	(3)	Beaumont-le-Roger	Jafü 3
I./JG 2	FW 190, Bf 109	44	(32)	Tricqueville	Jafü 3
II./JG 2	FW 190	44	(37)	Beaumont-le-Roger	Jafü 3
III./JG 2	FW 190	39	(35)	Théville	Jafü 3
10. (Jabo)/JG 2	Bf 109 F	11	(3)	Caen/Carpiquet	Jafü 3
Stab/JG 26	FW 190	6	(5)	St. Omer/Wizernes	Jafü 2
I./JG 26	FW 190	40	(33)	St. Omer/Wizernes	Jafü 2
II./JG 26	FW 190	41	(29)	Abbeville/Drucat	Jafü 2
III./JG 26	FW 190	39	(36)	Wevelgem	Jafü 2
10. (Jabo)/JG 26	Bf 109 F	14	(8)	St. Omer/Wizernes	Jafü 2



LEFT: By 1941 the standard system of Stab markings as prescribed pre-war was being modified to suit units' particular requirements. As a general rule, while JG 26 tended to mark its Stab aircraft with horizontal bars used together with a letter, or letters, based on the pilots' names, JG 2 seems to have modified the standard chevron and bar system in a variety of ingenious ways. These Stab markings, seen on a Bf 109 F in 1942, are very similar to those carried by Oblt. Rudolf Pflanz when Technical Officer of IG 2.

Increase in Low-level Fighter Attacks, April-May 1942

On 10 March, 1942, the commander of *Luftflotte* 3, *General* Hugo Sperrle, issued a directive calling for the creation of the two *Jabo Staffeln* within JG 2 and JG 26. The intention was probably to acknowledge retrospectively the existence of the two *Jabo Staffeln* and to allocate formal designations, for they then became the 10. (*Jabo*) *Staffel* of *Jagdgeschwader* 2 and 26, each *Staffel* operating independently of the *Geschwaderkommodore*.

The 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 2 was based around Evreux and Caen, and concentrated its attacks on shipping along the English South Coast, particularly between Brighton and Torquay. The *Staffel* became especially successful, claiming to have sunk 20 ships totalling 63,000 BRT between the time of its formation and 26 June 1942. The single-engined *Jabos* were well suited to attacks on sea-going targets as their small size and relatively quiet engine allowed them to attack by surprise and they did not require a fighter escort. Although especially successful in the anti-shipping role, the *Staffel* soon also began to attack land targets, towns along the South Coast being favourite objectives. Gasworks came in for particular attention and attacks were also made on small craft in harbour or close inshore.

In April 1942, the RAF's attacks on the *Reich* and German-occupied territory made it necessary to carry out reprisals and a new German bombing policy came into force, as ordered in the following message:



ABOVE: Shown at Beaumont-le-Roger in the Spring of 1942, these Bf 109 F-4/B fighter-bombers were operated by 10.(Jabo)/JG 2. These aircraft usually operated in pairs or as one or two Schwärme without fighter cover, pilots relying for protection on speed, surprise and their extremely low-level approach.



TOP LEFT AND LEFT: Also seen at Beaumont-le-Roger in the Spring of 1942, 'Blue 12', W.Nr. 13005, was a Bf 109 F-2/B normally flown by Ogfr. Franz Langhammer of 10.(Jabo)/JG 2. Langhammer was flying this aircraft on 21 April 1942 when he failed to return from a Jabo mission in the Portland area and was listed as missing in action.

BELOW: The emblem of 10.(Jabo)/JG 26.

BELOW: The Bf 109 F fighter-bombers normally carried an SC 250 bomb with a Type 38 Fuze, and although not sufficient to sink a warship, these were sufficient to damage the superstructure badly enough to allow subsequent attacks to be carried out without undue risk by standard bomber aircraft. When used against freighters, however, the SC 250 caused far greater damage.



July 1941-August 1943

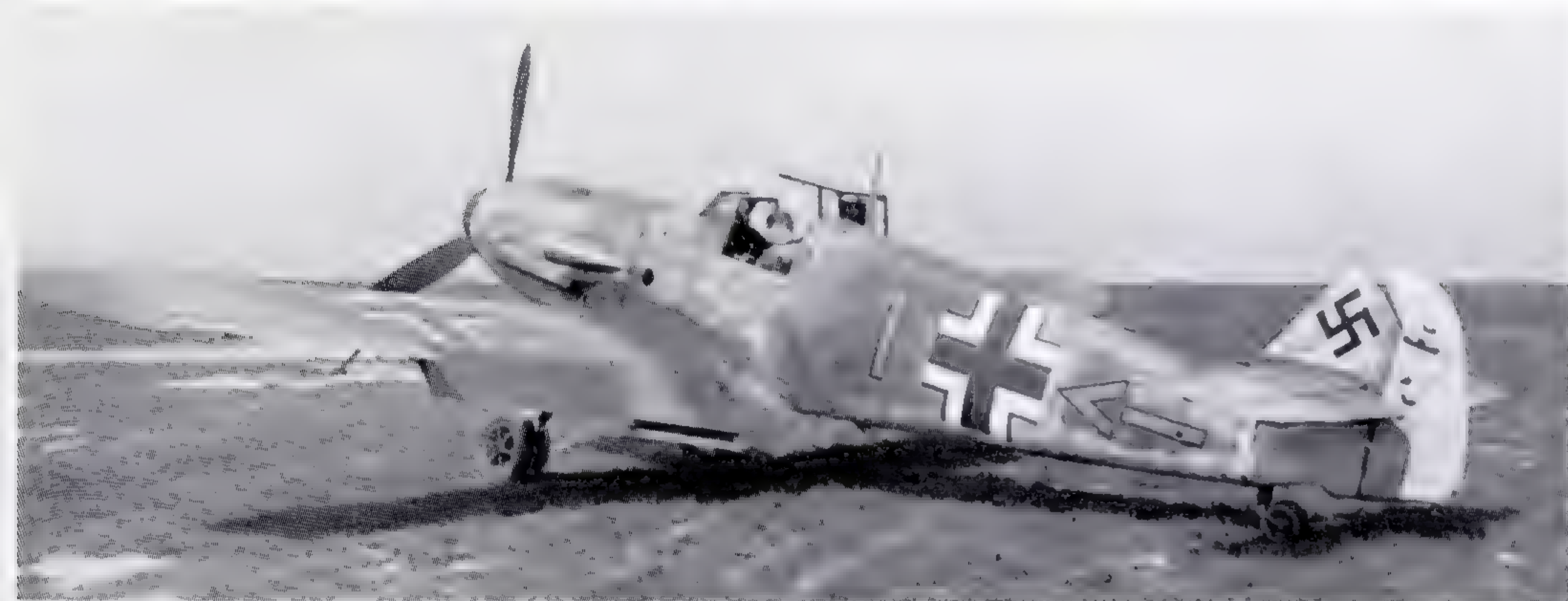


Messerschmitt Bf 109 F-4/B 'Blue 1' flown by Oblt. Frank Liesendahl, Staffelkapitän of 10.(Jabo)/JG 2, Spring 1942

Oblt. Liesendahl's W.Nr. 7629 was camouflaged in an RLM 74/75/76 scheme with the fuselage sides in a mottle of 74 and 75 which extended well down the fuselage sides and which was particularly dark around the areas of the aircraft's individual markings. Standard yellow identification markings appeared under the nose and on the rudder, the latter being marked with the silhouettes of ships sunk and damaged. Each silhouette is marked with the date the ship was attacked and the vessel's tonnage.



Emblem of 10.(Jabo)/JG 26



ABOVE AND ABOVE RIGHT: This Bf 109 F-4/B coded 'Blue 1' was flown by Oblt. Frank Liesendahl, Staffelkapitän of 10.(Jabo)/JG 2, a unit which operated mainly against coastal shipping in the English Channel. The markings painted on the rudder of Liesendahl's aircraft, shown in detail (**ABOVE RIGHT**) illustrate the successes claimed during these operations

RIGHT: Ground crew working on 'Blue 7', another of the Staffel's fighter-bombers. Note that the rudder markings on this aircraft are identical with those on 'Blue 1', suggesting that they represent the successes of the Staffel as a whole rather than the individual pilots. An all-black silhouette is thought to indicate a sinking whereas the black segments probably represent the area the bomb struck and the extent of the damage caused.



LEFT: Oblt. Liesendahl with Walter Oesau, the Kommodore of III./JG 2. On 17 July 1942, after 10.(Jabo)/JG 2 had converted to the Fw 190, Liesendahl was flying 'Blue 14', an Fw 190A-2, W.Nr. 0439, when he was shot down by light anti-aircraft fire from a tanker off Brixham, Devon. His body was later recovered from the sea and the propeller, recovered from the submerged wreck of his aircraft, is currently in private ownership in Britain.



“The Führer has ordered that the air war against England is to be given a more aggressive stamp. Accordingly, when targets are being selected, preference is to be given to those where attacks are likely to have the greatest possible effect on civilian life. Besides ports and industry, terror attacks of a retaliatory nature are to be carried out against towns other than London. Minelaying is to be scaled down in favour of these raids.”

Teletype message from the Führer’s Headquarters to the Operations Staff, Luftwaffe C-in-C, 14 April 1942.

Low-level attacks now increased and the bombing and machine-gunning attacks on South Coast towns became a real menace, British Intelligence recording a total of some 37 attacks involving 106 *Jabo* sorties over the British Isles in April. Most of these attacks were carried out by 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 26 which was based at St. Omer and specialised in such low-level surprise raids, especially against towns situated along the coast of Southern England east of Brighton. Prime targets were at first of a military or industrial nature and included railway installations, barracks, ships, factories, docks and especially gas installations. During April, for example, there were 17 fighter attacks on gasworks alone. Some of the *Luftwaffe*’s attacks showed evidence of careful planning as, for example, the two raids on Worth Matravers in Dorset, where there were four separate telecommunications research establishments and a radar station. The first attack, on 6 April, was carried out by three Bf 109 Fs that approached from the coast at about 400 feet, dropped three 250 kg bombs, and then machine-gunned the site. The raid took place at 19.07 hrs in daylight but under very poor, squally weather conditions with 9/10ths cloud cover down to 500 feet. On the second occasion, on 8 April, a similar raid was carried out by three more Bf 109 Fs. On this occasion, the weather was much better but although Fighter Command ordered up a total of 18 aircraft, no interceptions were effected.

Chance interceptions occurred and in one incident on 6 April, the pilot of a Spitfire airborne for a weather test, sighted two Bf 109s about four miles south of Dungeness. The Bf 109s tried to gain cloud cover but the Spitfire pilot was able to position himself behind one of the raiders, fired a four-second burst as it dived towards the sea and the aircraft crashed into the Channel. Such interceptions, however, were naturally infrequent but despite their relatively small bomb loads, the Bf 109 attacks were causing Fighter Command great concern.

A typical raid took place at 07.10 hrs on 20 April when five Bf 109s flying at less than 1,000 feet appeared near St. Alban’s Head where they spread out over Portland, Swanage, Poole and Bournemouth. Bombs were dropped and a train machine-gunned at Swanage, killing three people, injuring 14 and causing some damage to property. Bombs were also dropped in Poole Harbour. The weather at the time was very bad with fog and the cloud base at between 600 and 1,000 feet. Interception under such conditions was obviously extremely difficult and Fighter Command was unable to put up any of its own aircraft. The *Staffel*’s first loss on 24 April was due to anti-aircraft fire when, during an attack on a gasholder at Folkestone, Fw. Hans-Jürgen Fröhlich’s Bf 109 F was hit and crashed into the Channel.

Another attack of this type was the raid on Cowes on 28 April when seven Bf 109s appeared at 06.57 hrs flying at sea level. Bombs were dropped at Cowes and Newport on the Isle of Wight, causing extensive damage at a boat-building yard, while two bombs dropped on an aircraft factory failed to explode, halting production until defused. By 07.15 hrs the Bf 109s had disappeared out to sea.

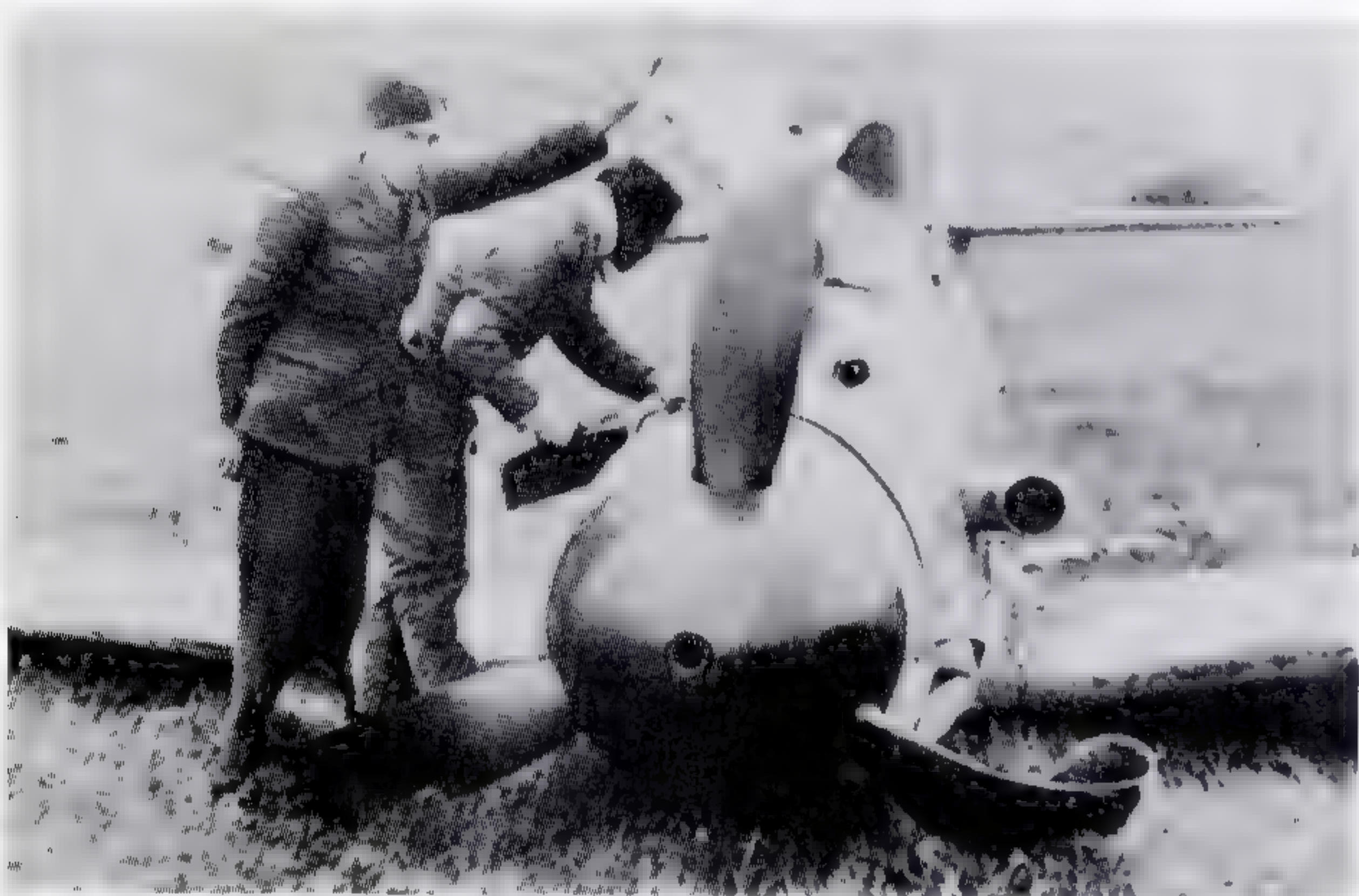
The number of these attacks increased still further in May when 57 low-level raids involving 136 sorties were carried out. Comparatively few key points were affected but a noticeable characteristic of the raids was the number of instances involving railways, electricity and, again, gas installations. By the middle of May, with the steadily rising number of such attacks, the position had become serious enough to warrant a redeployment of anti-aircraft guns, even at the risk of denuding important inland targets. On 22 May therefore, 11 towns and ports on the South Coast were considerably reinforced, largely at the expense of the Clyde, the Midlands and South Wales. However, during April and May, Anti-Aircraft Command proved even less successful than Fighter Command and the only Bf 109 lost was the aircraft flown by *Uffz.* Oswald Fischer of 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 26 whose ‘White 11’ was hit by naval anti-aircraft fire and forced landed at Beachy Head on 20 May.

In June, the return of poor weather restricted Bf 109 F *Jabo* sorties to just 68. At the same time, the *Jabos* began to assume a defensive as well as an offensive significance and, in the event of Allied operations against the continent, they were to bomb invasion craft and landing parties. Once they released their bombs, they would be used as fighters. This provision would later prove fortuitous when the Allies landed at Dieppe.



THIS PAGE: On 20 May 1942, Uffz. Oswald Fischer took off from St. Omer/Fort Rouge aerodrome in Northern France to attack shipping in or near Newhaven, harbour installations being designated as an alternative target. Fischer was accompanied by one other aircraft which, like his own, was carrying a single bomb and, with Fischer leading, both aircraft crossed the coast near Le Touquet and flew direct to Newhaven. They then circled until the pilots sighted shipping escorted by corvettes to the south-west and swept round to attack. Normally when attacking shipping, Fischer had opened fire during the approach to silence the ship's anti-aircraft fire, but on this occasion his target was only a small corvette and he considered it unnecessary. Fischer then released his bomb at sea-level but it hit the water and bounced over the ship. As Fischer

rose to clear the corvette, his engine was hit by machine gun fire and the temperature rose to 160°C. Realising that he would be unable to return to France, he warned the other aircraft by R/T that he intended to make a belly-landing on Beachy Head and was captured after he had fired all the rounds in his pistol into his aircraft's engine. It is believed that the other aircraft of the pair returned safely to France. When interrogated, Fischer, who had earlier flown with 7./JG 26 in Libya and France and had been awarded the EK I, claimed to have had 16 victories before volunteering to join the Jabo Staffel in March and, in the four weeks prior to his capture, had made 46 operational flights against a variety of objectives including railway stations, an aerodrome, a colliery, barracks and shipping. These photographs show Uffz. Fischer's 'White 11' being examined by RAF personnel at Beachy Head. The aircraft was subsequently moved to RAE Farnborough for further examination and in August 1943 was taken to RAF Collyweston where its damaged engine, which had flown only for one and a half hours, was replaced and the machine was restored to flying condition. Interestingly, when repainted in RAF camouflage and markings, the original white number and falling bomb emblem were retained.



Messerschmitt Bf 109 F-4 flown by Uffz. Oswald Fischer of 10.(Jabo)/JG 26, May 1942

This aircraft, W.Nr. 7232, was finished in a standard 74/75/76 and 02 camouflage scheme but with a particularly heavy mottle on the fuselage sides. The aircraft numeral and the falling bomb emblem were both white, and the rudder and the panel below the engine were yellow. The RLM 70 propeller spinner lacked the usual white segment.



RIGHT: Seen at Caen-Carpiquet loaded with an SC 250 bomb, this Bf 109 F-4/B, 'White 2', W.Nr. 8352 of 10.(Jabo)/JG 26, was flown by Fw. Otto Görtz during a Jabo mission to the Bournemouth area on the evening of 6 June 1942. During the attack, this aircraft was shot down by anti-aircraft fire and Fw. Görtz was killed. Note that on the bomb silhouette on the rear fuselage, sprayed highlights have been added in an attempt to accentuate its shape.



As for Fighter Command's renewed offensive, it was obvious it was not achieving the desired or expected results against the German fighter force. Once again, RAF losses were considerable and at all times greater than those inflicted on the *Luftwaffe*. In the first two weeks of April, for example, the RAF lost four aircraft for every German fighter destroyed and in an attempt to redress this unfavourable ratio, the size of the 'Circus' escorts was increased. Nevertheless, the *Luftwaffe*'s fighters continued to resist strongly RAF attempts to penetrate, as on 16 April when the Bf 109s of I./JG 2 intercepted a late morning 'Ramrod' ⁴ mission to Le Havre during which two pilots of the 2. *Staffel*, *Feldwebel* Günter Keil and Karl Schweikart, each claimed a Spitfire. Similarly, in the afternoon, 7./JG 2 intercepted 'Rodeo' ⁵ No. 10 and a consecutive 'Ramrod' to Cherbourg and claimed three victories, two of which were credited to *Oblt.* Egon Mayer. The early evening saw no fewer than five RAF fighter wings carry out 'Rodeo' No.2 across the area of the Pas de Calais where they were attacked by III./JG 26 and 7./JG 2 which claimed four victories, one being credited to *Hptm.* Josef Priller of *Stab* III./JG26 as his 64th victory. Losses during the evening's activities cost I. and III./JG 2 a Bf 109 F-4 and its pilot apiece.

On the afternoon of 17 April, during a low-level daylight mission to the MAN diesel-engine works at Augsburg, the leading formation of a force of Lancasters – the RAF's new four-engined bomber – flew over JG 2's airfield at Beaumont-le-Roger. A number of fighters took off in pursuit and, in a running battle lasting almost an hour, shot down four of the bombers. The successful pilots included the *Kommandeur* of II./JG 2, *Hptm* Karl-Heinz Greisert, and Fw. Otto Pohl of the 5. *Staffel* whose *Abschuss* was the *Geschwader's* 1,000th victory in the West. The fourth Lancaster was shot down by *Major* Walter Oesau who had been officially forbidden to fly on operations after scoring his 100th victory some six months previously and accounted for his 101st victory by explaining that he had been flying in the vicinity of the airfield when the bombers appeared and had shot one down in self-defence!

BELOW: Major Walter Oesau, second from left, again with members of his *Stabsschwarm*. The Bf 109 F in the background is a *Geschwader Stab* machine.

BELOW: The *Stabsschwarm* of JG 2 in August 1941. From left to right: *Oblt.* Erich Leie, *Ofw.* Günther Seeger, *Major* Walter Oesau (*Kommodore*) and *Oblt.* Rudolf Pflanz.



4. Heavily escorted incursion where the object was to destroy the target.

5. Fighter sweep without bombers.



LEFT: Bf 109 Fs of 2./JG 2, based at St. Omer-Wizernes, escorting a Ju 52 to the Channel coast airfield at St. Brieuc in May 1942.

On 1 June, the RAF's Debden Wing suffered particularly severely when, acting as target support during an attack on Bruges docks, it was intercepted near Ostend by I. and III./JG 26 and lost nine out of the 46 Spitfire Vbs which were engaged in a battle with approximately the same number of Fw 190s. JG 26 suffered no losses and of the successful pilots, victories were awarded to the *Kommodore*, Major Schöpfel, who now had 40 victories, and *Hptm.* Priller, *Kommandeur* of III. *Gruppe*, who now had 73.

The skill of the German pilots and the destructive power of the Fw 190 was again demonstrated in the afternoon of 2 June when *Hptm.* Johannes Seifert's I./JG 26 attacked the Spitfire Vs of 403 Squadron, led by S/Ldr. Alan Deere, returning to England after participating in 'Rodeo' No. 69. Seifert attacked from astern, and as Deere called for the squadron to break into their attackers, *Hptm.* Joachim Müncheberg's II. *Gruppe*, which had been shadowing the squadron behind thin cloud, dived into the side of 403 in a perfect 'bounce.' As Deere later recalled:

"Savagely I hauled my reluctant Spitfire around to meet this new attack and the next moment I was engulfed by enemy fighters – above, below and on both sides, they crowded in on my section. Ahead and above, I caught a glimpse of an Fw 190 as it poured cannon shells into the belly of an unsuspecting Spitfire. For a brief second the Spitfire seemed to stop in mid-air, and the next instant it folded inwards and broke in two, the two pieces plummeting earthwards; a terrifying demonstration of the punch of the Fw 190's four cannon and two machine guns... Never had I seen the Hun stay and fight it out as these Focke-Wulf pilots were doing."

In this engagement, JG 26 claimed seven Spitfires, and elsewhere, JG 2 claimed two Spitfires bringing total claims to nine. Total losses directly attributable to enemy fighter action in the first two days of June amounted to no fewer than 19 Spitfire Vs shot down with 15 pilots killed or captured, all for the loss of a single Fw 190 and its pilot. By the end of the first fortnight in June, the RAF had recorded losses amounting to 42 aircraft destroyed and 33 pilots killed or captured in return for the claimed destruction of only 22 enemy aircraft, although German records show that the true number was even lower, amounting to only seven.

Even more remarkable than the fact that these victories were all over the much-vaunted Spitfire was that the majority of them were claimed by just five *Luftwaffe* pilots: *Oblt.* Egon Mayer of 7./JG 2 who claimed five in the two-week period, *Hptm.* Siegfried Schnell of 9./JG 2 who claimed eight, four of these on 3 June, and *Ofw.* Josef Wurmheller of 1./JG 2 who claimed nine victories, four of them on the 5th. Also successful were *Hptm.* Hans Hahn of III./JG 2 who claimed three victories on the 6th, and *Oblt.* Rudolf Pflanz of 1./JG 2 with seven in the same two weeks.

Successes such as these occurred when the *Luftwaffe* was in a superior tactical position and possessed a temporary numerical parity or superiority. Nevertheless, this was evidence – if such were needed – to show the skill with which the Germans were encountering the RAF's operations since they normally flew less than one quarter of the number of sorties. On 26 June, for example, the RAF flew 301 sorties consisting of a 'Circus' against the docks at Le Havre and two 'Roadstead' operations,



ABOVE: Hptm. Johannes Seifert photographed on his return from a sortie. Note the flare cartridges around his right calf and the bag of yellow dye hanging from his left side, both valuable rescue aids in the event of an emergency landing in the Channel. Hptm. Seifert became Kommandeur of I./JG 26 on 11 July 1941 and led the Gruppe until transferred on 31 May 1943, by which time he had risen to the rank of Major.

during which they claimed a single victory. The *Luftwaffe* only flew 35 sorties but succeeded in destroying two RAF aircraft.

Fighter Command's situation had not improved by the end of June when it became evident that the balance in casualties was gradually tipping against Fighter Command which had lost a total of 265 aircraft for the destruction of 58 German fighters in the four months since 8 March. Although the balance was weighed in favour of the *Luftwaffe* by the advantage of fighting over friendly territory and the ability to choose whether or not to attack, the most important reason for the *Jagdarmee's* success was the marked superiority of the Fw 190 over the Spitfire Vb which then equipped the majority of Fighter Command's squadrons. The Fw 190 had a better rate of climb, was faster, and was almost as manoeuvrable as the Spitfire Vb. Moreover, with four 20 mm cannon and two machine guns it was much more heavily armed.

In addition to the *Luftwaffe's* general technical superiority in the Fw 190, it had also improved its control and warning system in France and Belgium by adding a second line of *Freya* radar sets farther inland. These monitored the location of approaching enemy formations and the installation of *FuG 25a* IFF sets in German formation leaders' aircraft allowed the

controllers to vector friendly aircraft and, despite increasing British use of feints and diversions, permitted a more effective response than previously. The *Jagdarmee* also improved its tactics. Instead of climbing out to intercept raids before they reached the coast, defending fighters were content to gain height in back areas and then move to a superior tactical position, i.e. up-sun and with superior height, from which they could intercept without heavy losses. This forced the RAF to content itself with attacking targets along the German-occupied coastline. Except in special cases, when the expected losses could be justified by the results achieved, deep penetrations in 'Circus' operations were mainly avoided, at least until the Spitfire IX and the Typhoon could be used to offset the superiority of the Fw 190.

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The RAF Acquires an Fw 190

"We are now in a position of inferiority... There is no doubt in my mind, nor in the minds of my fighter pilots, that the Fw 190 is the best all-round fighter in the world today."

Letter from Air Chief Marshall Sholto Douglas, C-in-C Fighter Command, to Air Ministry, 17 July 1942.

Although it had already proved its abilities in combat, the true superiority of the Fw 190 was not wholly understood until an A-3 of III./JG 2, flown by the *Gruppenadjutant*, Oblt. Armin Faber, landed in error on an RAF airfield in Wales on the evening of 23 June 1942.

On that date, Faber was flying as part of a formation which took off to intercept a strongly escorted force of 12 RAF Boston bombers en route to attack the airfield at Morlaix. Shortly after becoming airborne, Faber discovered that his radio was unserviceable but, almost immediately, the Spitfire escort was sighted and an intense battle developed. Eventually finding himself suddenly alone with a faulty radio, Faber was searching for a French airfield on which to land when a Spitfire appeared close behind him. Despite a number of evasive manoeuvres, Faber could not shake off his pursuer who continuously forced him further northwards. Soon Faber had crossed the English coast and was flying towards Exeter, all the time climbing into the evening sun. At 19,000 ft he performed an Immelmann turn and attacked the Spitfire head-on. Although both pilots fired simultaneously, Faber scored first, severely damaging his opponent and forcing the pilot to bale out.

After circling the Spitfire pilot's parachute, Faber then mistakenly flew off in a northerly direction across the Bristol Channel. As the coast of Wales came into view, he performed a victory roll over RAF Pembrey and landed at what he believed was a French airfield. Faber's victory roll had been witnessed by a duty pilot who grabbed a Verey pistol, ran up to the Fw 190 and captured Faber as he taxied in.

BELOW:

An interesting photograph showing Hptm. "Assi" Hahn alighting from Fw 190 A-3 Werk Nr. 5313, the same aircraft which Oblt. Armin Faber later landed in error at RAF Pembrey.



ABOVE: A Spitfire Mk Vb. Prior to September 1941 the Spitfire's main opponent was the Bf 109 F, against which it was fairly evenly matched below 20,000 feet, but above that height the Bf 109 was slightly superior. However, when the Fw 190 appeared, the Spitfire V was outclassed in all respects other than the Spitfire's tighter turning radius. Not until July 1942, when an increased supply of the Spitfire IX became available, did the RAF possess an aircraft capable of fighting the Fw 190 on approximately equal terms, but even then the Fw 190 still had the advantage at low level.

Such was Faber's bewilderment and shock that at first he could only converse in French. His aircraft provided the RAF with the opportunity to assess a perfectly airworthy example of the new fighter and it was subsequently evaluated against contemporary Allied fighters.

In the Summer months of 1942, the frequency of the Allied incursions increased and the Channel coast *Geschwader* were involved in almost daily air battles. The 30th of July was a busy day for JG 26, the pilots of which claimed 13 Allied fighters, three being claimed by *Hptm.* Johannes Seifert, *Kommandeur* of I./JG 26. The next day, Seifert claimed a Spitfire as his 40th victory and *Fw.* Adolf Glunz of 4./JG 26 claimed two Spitfires to bring his victory total to 20. Of the two victories claimed that day by JG 2, one was filed by *Oblt.* Egon Mayer of 7./JG 2, but 11.(*Höhen*)/JG 2 lost its *Staffelkapitän*, *Ritterkreuzträger* and 52-victory ace *Oblt.* Rudolf Pflanz, who was shot down and killed during the afternoon.



LEFT: One of the most successful pilots on the Channel Front was Rudolf Pflanz who joined the 'Richthofen' *Geschwader* in 1938 and remained with the unit until his death. At the outbreak of the Second World War, Rudolf "Rudi" Pflanz was serving with 3./JG 2 and recorded his first victory on 14 May 1940, when he shot down an RAF Blenheim twin-engined bomber. During the Battle of Britain, he flew in the *Stabsschwarm* with the *Kommodore*, Major Helmut Wick, and on 23 July 1941 shot down five Spitfires and a Hurricane which brought his victory total to 16. By 1 August, *Oblt.* Pflanz's total had increased to 20 and he was decorated with the *Ritterkreuz*. He continued to be successful during the rest of 1941 and the first half of 1942, particularly against RAF Spitfires. On 1 May 1942, he became *Staffelkapitän* of 11.(*Höhen*)/JG 2, a special high-altitude *Staffel* equipped with Bf 109 G-1s fitted with pressurised cockpits, and on 5 June he again achieved multiple victories when he destroyed three Spitfires over the Somme Estuary. During an engagement with Spitfires on 31 July 1942, Pflanz succeeded in shooting down one but his Bf 109 G-1 'White 1' was then shot down and exploded over Berck-sur-Mer on the French coast. Posthumously promoted to the rank of *Hauptmann*, Pflanz's final tally, all achieved in the West, was 52 victories, 45 of which were Spitfires.

RIGHT: Pflanz was replaced as *Staffelkapitän* of 11.(*Höhen*)/JG 2 by *Oblt.* Julius Meimberg, seen relaxing beside his Bf 109G-1 'White 11' at Poix during the Summer of 1942.



In the late afternoon of 17 August 1942, after several delays caused by poor weather, the newly-arrived US Eighth Air Force carried out its first B-17 raid when the bombers, escorted by Spitfire IXs, attacked the marshalling yards at Rouen-Sotteville in France. The Spitfires were intercepted by elements of JG 2 and II./JG 26 which succeeded in downing two for the loss of one Fw 190 and its pilot, but all the bombers returned to England without loss.

Similar missions against targets in occupied France and the Low Countries followed as the Americans gained experience in their particular concept of aerial warfare which called for attacks in broad daylight on precisely defined German military and industrial targets. Having tried daylight raids and failed, the RAF was convinced that no bomber force could operate over Germany by day in large numbers and pressured the USAAF to employ its B-17s at night. The Americans, however, were convinced that by flying in close formation, the collective defensive firepower of the heavily-armed B-17s would prove mutually supportive and that their formations would be able to defeat any opposition. Although the Rouen raid was insignificant in itself, it marked the beginning of a new bombing offensive which, although at first weak, short-ranged and carried out by crews lacking combat experience, would eventually reach into every corner of the Third Reich. The significance of the B-17 raid, however, was somewhat overshadowed that month by the Allied raid on Dieppe, during which fighter forces in the West became involved in the biggest series of daylight battles since the Autumn of 1940.

RIGHT: Ground crew pushing Fw 190 A-3 'White 1', W.Nr. 518, into its protective blast pen. This aircraft was flown by the *Staffelkapitän* of 10./JG 1, *Oblt.* Friedrich Eberle and is believed to have been photographed at Bergen-op-Zoom in Holland in May 1942. The rudder carries 12 black victory bars. As a *Hauptmann*, Eberle later commanded III./JG 1. It is possible that the entire vertical tail surfaces on this aircraft were painted white and, if so, was probably an early attempt to provide formation leaders' aircraft with an easily recognisable feature to aid assembly in the air and which was more widely adopted a year later.

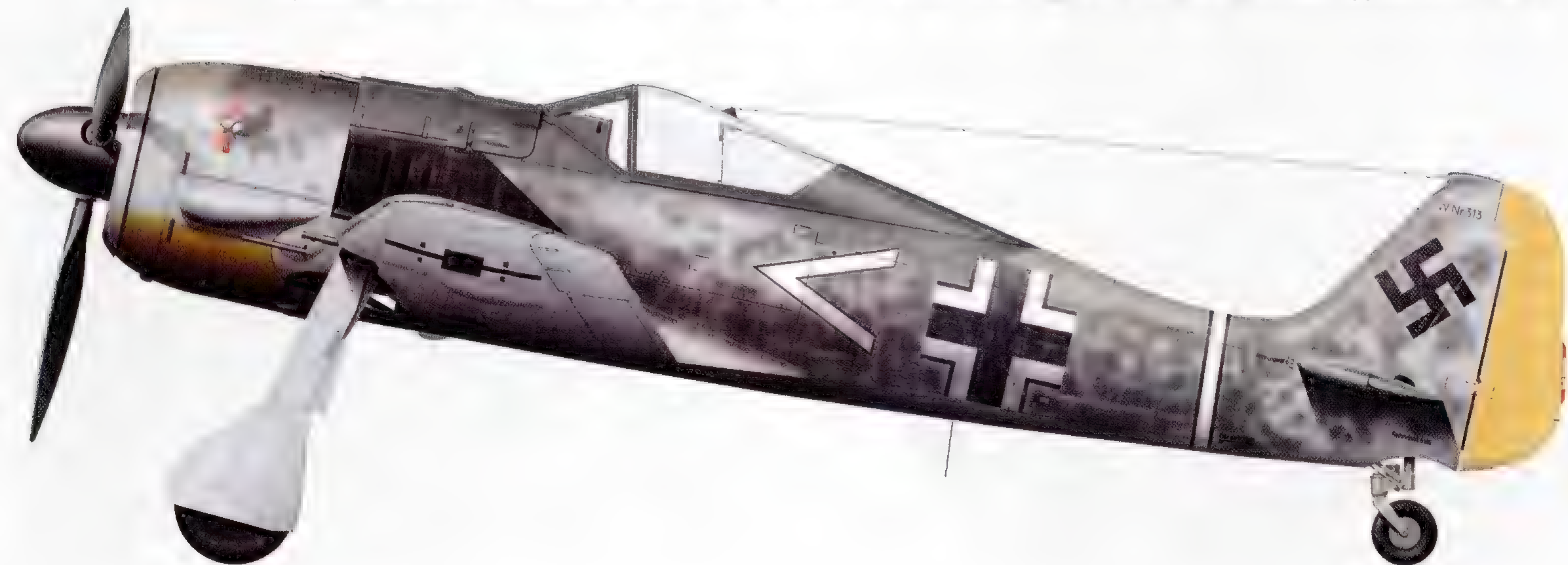


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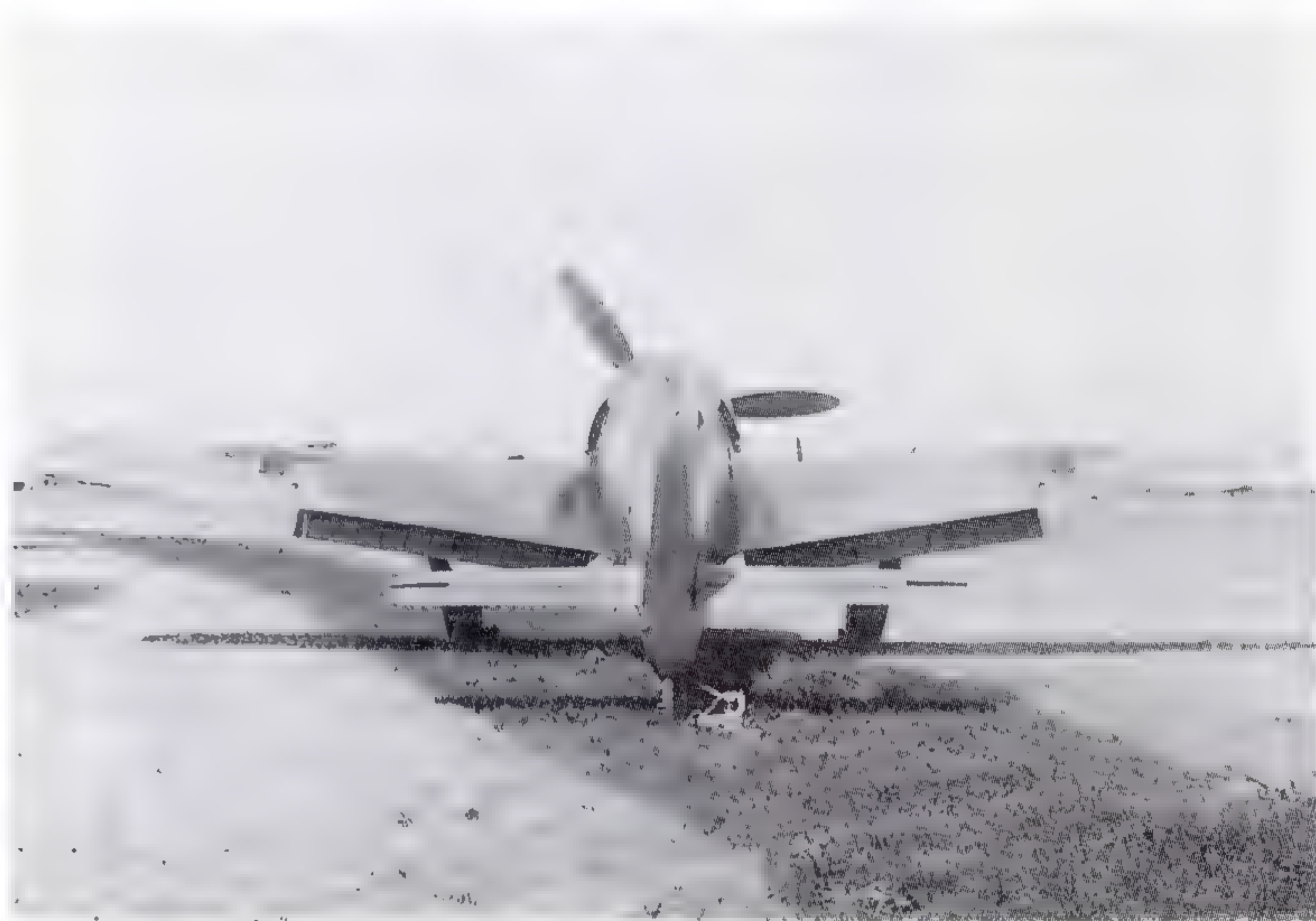
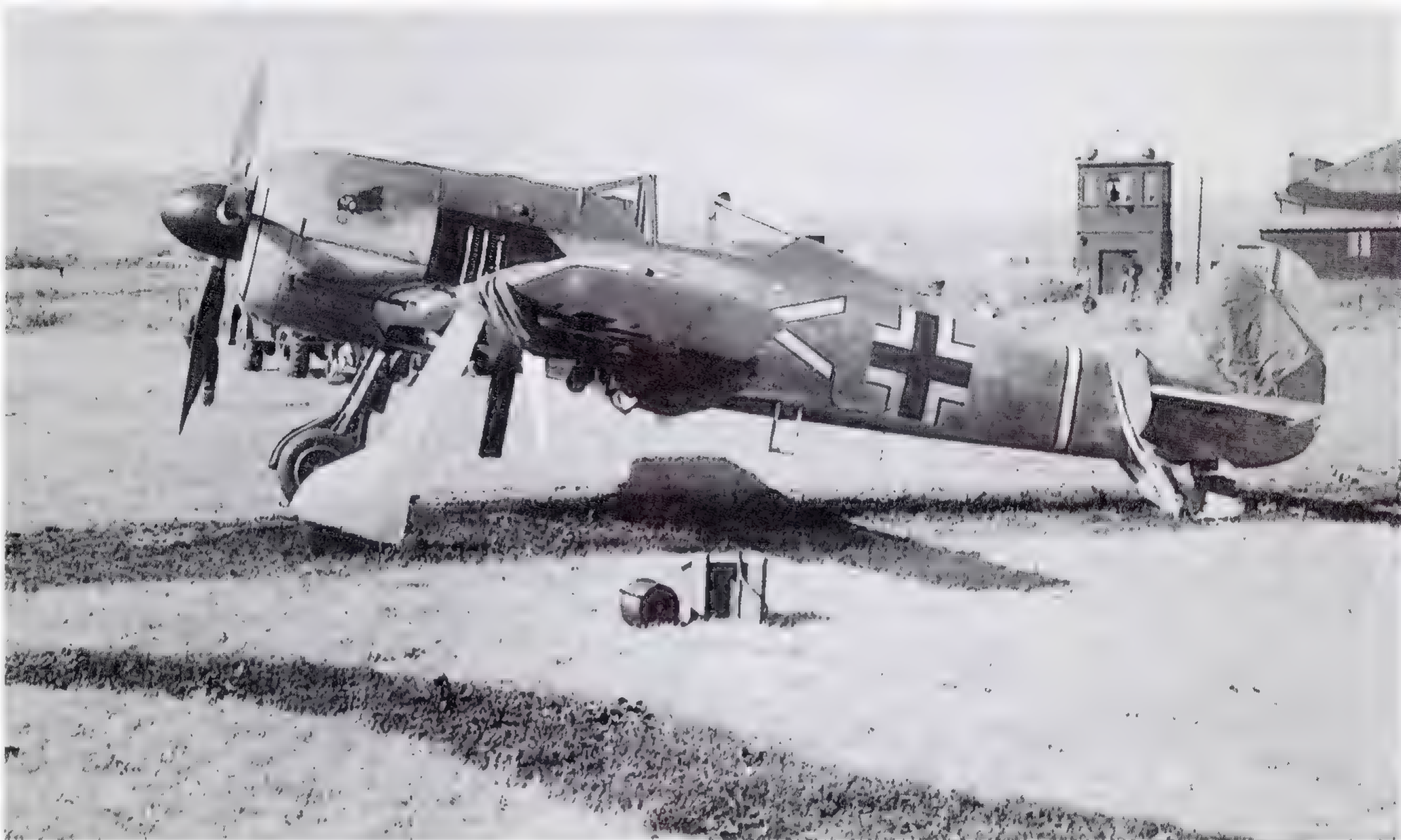


Focke-Wulf Fw 190 A-3, W.Nr. 5313, flown by Oblt. Armin Faber, Gruppenadjutant of III./JG 2, 23 June 1942

Two wartime descriptions exist on the camouflage colours of this aircraft. One mentions a "normal" German fighter camouflage, which is hardly helpful as this had been changed comparatively recently from an 02/71/65 scheme to 74/75/76. However, this report does go on to describe a mottled blue-grey finish with pale blue undersurfaces, while the other, an RAF Intelligence Report, mentions dark green, light olive green and pale blue. On balance, the latter is thought to be the more accurate description and the aircraft is therefore shown here with 02/71 uppersurfaces and 76 undersurfaces. Note that only the last three digits of the Werk Nummer appeared on the fin.



*OPPOSITE, RIGHT
BELOW LEFT AND
BELOW RIGHT:*
Fw 190 A-3, W.Nr. 5313,
on the airfield at
Pembrey in South
Wales where its pilot,
Oblt. Armin Faber, the
Gruppenadjutant of
III./JG 2, landed in
error after combat with
a Spitfire of
310 Squadron on
23 June 1942. Note the
camouflage pattern and
style of wing crosses in
the rear view of the
same aircraft (*BELOW
RIGHT*).



LEFT AND BELOW: Faber's Fw 190 was repainted in RAF markings, allocated the serial number MP 499 and evaluated at Farnborough. It was later sent for evaluation trials at the Air Fighting Development Unit at Duxford. Armin Faber himself was later transferred to a PoW camp in Canada from where, after two failed escape attempts, he was repatriated on grounds of ill health in the closing months of the war.



The Air Battle Over Dieppe

At dawn on 19 August 1942, the Allies mounted Operation *'Jubilee'*, a large-scale reconnaissance landing at Dieppe. The operation had as its objective the destruction of the harbour facilities, aerodrome installations near the town, power stations and local defences, but the main purpose of the raid – even today still not entirely clear – was probably to obtain information on German defensive measures which would later prove useful in planning for a full-scale Allied landing in occupied Europe.

The landing force, amounting to slightly more than 6,000 men, mostly from the 2nd Canadian Division, crossed the Channel in 237 vessels, the majority of which were various landing craft, but the fleet also included nine infantry landing ships and an escort of eight destroyers. Also landed were commando units whose task was to destroy coastal batteries to either side of the main attack. For Fighter Command, the operation was regarded as a means of forcing the German fighters into battle under conditions of absolute RAF numerical superiority. In fact, senior RAF officers were so confident that the raid would provide the long-sought opportunity to bring the German fighter force to a decisive battle that, after the cancellation of the original raid on 7 July, the RAF became one of the foremost lobbyists for its revival. Fighter Command committed 51 fighter squadrons to *'Jubilee'*: four with Spitfire IXs, 42 with Spitfire Vs, two with Spitfire VIs and three with Typhoons. In addition, fighter-bomber support was provided by eight squadrons of Hurricane IIs, and also committed were tactical reconnaissance squadrons equipped with Mustang Is and seven squadrons of Blenheim and Boston light bombers.

Opposing the Allied force were JG 2 and JG 26 which, with a combined strength of some 206 Fw 190 and Bf 109 fighters, were outnumbered by a ratio of almost three to one. The only *Luftwaffe* day bombers available were some 95 aircraft of KG 2 and KG 40 based at Deelen, Eindhoven, Gilze-Rijen and Soesterberg. Closer to the Dieppe area were some 20 Fw 190 fighter-bombers of the *Jabostaffeln* 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 2 and 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 26.

At first, the landing took the Germans by surprise as they considered a daylight attack unsuitable for such a venture and, indeed, the operation did prove ill-conceived, over-optimistic and an almost total failure. The landing craft of the main landing force were met by a murderous storm of fire and the few tanks that got off the beach were unable to break through the German defences. Success in the face of such determined opposition was so clearly impossible that by 09.00 hrs the decision had already been taken to evacuate, but it was another three or four hours of continued slaughter before the last of the survivors were taken off.

The first to sight the landing force was a *Rotte* of Fw 190s from 5./JG 26 which was ordered to reconnoitre the Dieppe area where the defences had opened fire on what they assumed, correctly, to be an amphibious landing force. Although it would seem that German forces were not forewarned about the raid, the decisive action which characterised their operations would appear to indicate that a plan of operations to meet such an emergency was in existence and German controllers ordered JG 2 and JG 26 into the air even before the two Fw 190s from 5./JG 26 had returned. The first victory of the day was claimed by *Ofw.* Heinrich Bierwirth of 5./JG 26 who destroyed a Spitfire north of Dieppe. A few minutes later, *Uffz.* Kurt Epsiger of 1./JG 2 shot down a Boston bomber and a Spitfire before his Fw 190 collided with a Hurricane and both pilots were killed.

German fighters flew approximately 600 sorties during the day but paid little attention to the troops on land and concentrated chiefly on the Allied aircraft, although some strafing attacks against landing craft were carried out. Although the damage caused by aircraft gunfire during these attacks was greater than appeared from the air, German pilots found it almost impossible to set the landing craft on fire. Only after combined attacks by a number of aircraft totalling some 50-60 runs, during which hits were scored on the engine in the stern of the vessel, was fire observed.

The *Jabos* were chiefly responsible for the successes against Allied vessels and at 14.00 hrs, two Fw 190s from 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 26 carried out a dive attack on the destroyer HMS *Berkeley*, one scoring a direct hit with a 500 kg bomb which caused such damage that the ship had later to be sunk by British forces. This *Staffel* also attacked other warships, transports, torpedo boats and landing craft, losing only one pilot, *Uffz.* Heinrich von Berg. Apparently, von Berg had just bombed a ship off Dieppe when



LEFT: The destroyer HMS Berkeley under attack during the early afternoon of 19 August.



LEFT: HMS Berkeley, well down by the bows, shortly before she was abandoned. Unable to be recovered, the damaged destroyer was subsequently sunk by other Royal Navy vessels involved in evacuating troops from the Dieppe beaches.

he was attacked by a Spitfire which is presumed to have damaged his aircraft since, after making an intermediate landing at Ducat to examine his machine, he crashed shortly afterwards. Paradoxically, the great use by the Allies of smoke screens was found to be usually very favourable for the fighter-bombers for, instead of screening the ships, the smoke concealed their own attacks. The Dieppe raid cost the Royal Navy one destroyer and 33 landing craft.

Especially successful during the day was 10.(Jabo)/JG 2, now under the command of *Oblt.* Fritz Schröter, which was considered to have "covered itself with glory". In an after-action report, the Operations Staff of *Luftflotte* 3 Headquarters commented that the two fighter-bomber units, but particularly 10.(Jabo)/JG 2, rendered "...splendid service, despite having been continuously in action against daily Allied air raids since 2 August". In a similar report, Max Ibel, at that time *Jafü* 3, also singled out 10.(Jabo)/JG 2 as being especially successful.

From 15.45 hrs onwards the weather deteriorated rapidly and the *Luftwaffe* took advantage of the increasing cloud cover to send out single bombers to attack the shipping as it returned to the English coast. A few Fw 190s were also employed for the same purpose and surprise attacks were carried out by 10.(Jabo)/JG 2 on ships further out to sea. Two ships of 2,000 - 3,000 tons were claimed sunk and a third was so badly damaged that it had to stop engines. Despite Royal Navy claims that ten aircraft were hit by return fire, most damage was caused by machine gun fire and was correspondingly light. One aircraft, however, was hit by a 40 mm shell and although severely damaged in the propeller and engine, the pilot succeeded in nursing his crippled machine back to base.

By late afternoon, the *Jagdarmee* had expended all 20 mm ammunition on hand and after the last air battles had dispersed that evening, its strength had been reduced to only some 70 serviceable aircraft. However, Fw 190 losses were quickly made good by the immediate delivery of 18 aircraft from the forwarding facility at Wevelgem, while overnight repair work and a further influx of replacement fighters raised their strength to 194 serviceable aircraft by the following morning.

After the raid, the RAF claimed 96 victories with a further 103 German aircraft probably destroyed or damaged. However, total *Luftwaffe* losses amounted to 48 aircraft, of which 23 were fighters, 16 from JG 2 and seven from JG 26, plus 14 pilots killed and seven wounded. The wounded included *Oblt.* Erich Leie, *Gruppenkommandeur* of 1./JG 2, who was shot down and injured shortly after claiming the destruction of a Spitfire as his 43rd victory.

German fighter pilot claims amounted to 96, JG 2 claiming about 60 victories and JG 26 about 38. Fighter Command's actual losses were 91 aircraft and 64 pilots. Adding further victories to their totals during the day were a number of high-scoring pilots from JG 2 and JG 26 including *Oblt.* Egon Mayer of 7./JG 2 who was credited with a Hurricane and a Spitfire, *Lt.* Kurt Bühligen of 4./JG 2 who claimed a Spitfire in the morning and two more in the evening, and *Oblt.* Eric Rudorffer of 6./JG 2 who was credited with two Spitfires shot down in quick succession in the afternoon. *Oblt.* Fulbert Zink, *Staffelkapitän* of 2./JG 26 claimed a Mustang and two Spitfires, bringing his tally to 26, while *Oblt.* Siegfried Schnell of 9./JG 2 claimed five Spitfires. However, the most successful pilot of the day was undoubtedly *Ofw.* Josef Wurmheller of 1./JG 2 who, despite a broken leg and concussion resulting from an earlier crash-landing, was credited with two Spitfires and a Blenheim in the morning, a Spitfire in the afternoon and, of a further four Spitfires claimed in the evening, received confirmation for two of them bringing his total victories to 60. In recognition of 10.(Jabo)/JG 2's achievements during the Dieppe operation and for his earlier outstanding performance against shipping and harbour targets on the British south coast, *Oblt.* Schröter was awarded the Knight's Cross.

In spite of being outnumbered, the *Jagdflieger's* superior training and aggression had succeeded in defeating Fighter Command which, eventually, would have to rethink its role in the projected invasion of occupied Europe. However, in 1942, that was a matter of little urgency and for the present, in spite of losses that would continue to exceed victories by a factor of almost two to one, Fighter Command would remain committed to its 'Circus' and 'Rhubarb' operations.



BELOW: During the aerial battles over Dieppe, *Oblt.* Erich Leie, the *Kommandeur* of 1./JG 2, was shot down and had to bale out, during the course of which he injured his right arm. Here, a bandaged *Oblt.* Leie discusses his experiences with (from the left) *Lt.* Josef Wurmheller, *Hptm.* Hans-Jürgen Heppe and *Uffz.* Heinz Dowahn, all of 1./JG 2.



LEFT: A Churchill in the markings of 'B' Squadron of the Canadian 14th Tank Regiment stranded on the beach at Dieppe. Hidden by the rear right shackle on the hull plate is the symbol of the 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade, a black ram on a yellow maple leaf superimposed on a black square. More clearly shown are the exhaust extensions fitted for shallow wading. Three-quarters of the Churchill tanks landed at Dieppe lost their tracks due to the pebbled beach and were immobilised, and although 14 others actually got off the beach and onto the esplanade, they were all destroyed by German guns as they tried to fight their way forward into the town.



ABOVE: *Oblt.* Fritz Schröter became *Staffelkapitän* of 10.(Jabo)/JG 26 in July 1942 and was awarded the *Ritterkreuz* for his outstanding successes as a fighter-bomber pilot against shipping and targets on the English south coast as well as during the Dieppe operation.

RIGHT: Allied dead, knocked-out Churchill tanks and burning landing craft litter the beach at Dieppe after the Allied withdrawal. Although losses were high, Operation 'Jubilee' undoubtedly provided the Allies with information and experience important to the planning of future sea-borne assaults.



FAR LEFT AND LEFT: An early A-series Fw190, probably an A-1 but possibly an A-2 or A-3, with an interesting nose decoration. It is almost certain that this aircraft belonged to II./JG 1 and was photographed in the Spring of 1942, although whether it was an operational machine or one used by the unit for training purposes is not known. In the Summer of 1942 a similarly marked machine was flown by Oblt. Harry Koch, Staffelfkapitän of 7./JG 1 (**LEFT**).

The USAAF Enters the Fray

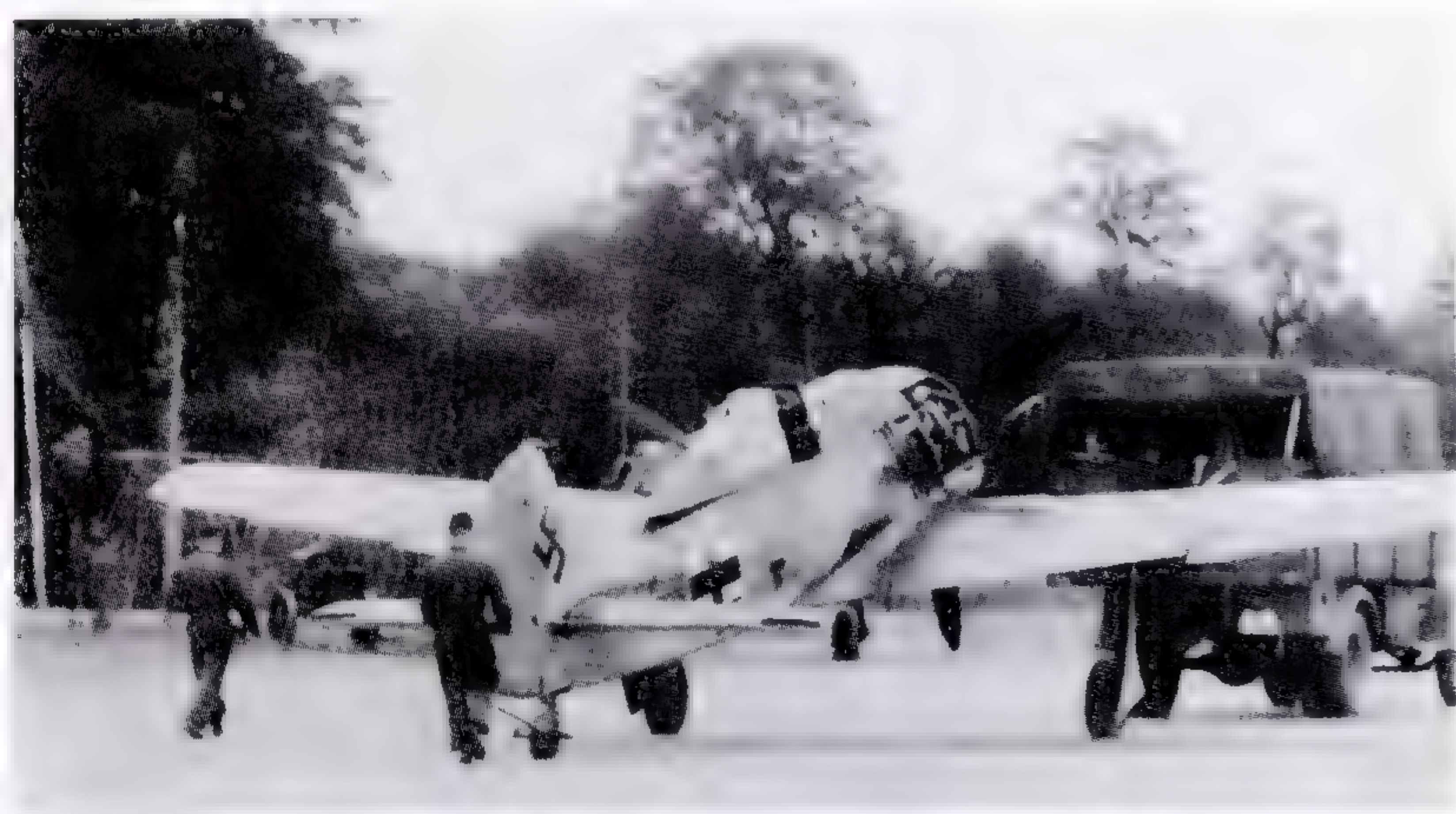
The Americans' belief in their daylight bomber strategy seemed to be vindicated on 21 August when seven Eighth Air Force B-17s set out on a late afternoon attack to bomb Rotterdam's shipyards. Once the Spitfire escort had left, the bombers were attacked by nine Fw 190s from II./JG 1 led by *Oblt.* Robert Olejnik, but the well-ordered grouping of the bombers did indeed allow them to fend off the attacking fighters which succeeded only in lightly damaging three B-17s.

Luftwaffe tacticians and unit commanders soon realised that bringing about the destruction of the *Viermots* – a contraction of *Vier Motoren*, or 'four engines' – was no simple task. Merely breaking through the escort was difficult enough, but once through, the *Jagdflieger* were then faced with a close formation of B-17s, each carrying up to 12 machine guns positioned to provide maximum all-round protection from fighter attack. At first, conventional attacks were made from all directions but predominantly from the rear of the formation, and the German fighters' first success against the heavy bombers occurred on the evening of 6 September when more than 50 B-17s attacked an aircraft factory at Meaulte. The bombers were intercepted by elements of II./JG 2 and II./JG 26, and although almost all the bombers were damaged, only two were lost, one being claimed by *Hptm.* Karl-Heinz Meyer, the *Kommandeur* of II./JG 26, who shot down a B-17 near Amiens and in doing so accounted for the first *Luftwaffe* victory over an American heavy bomber.

Although between 45 and 50 German fighters had engaged the bombers, total claims amounted

only to three B-17s, and one of these was not confirmed. Already it was becoming obvious that the destruction of the US heavies was no simple matter and, because the B-17s carried a greater bomb load than the Blenheims and Bostons previously encountered, the Germans could no longer afford to ignore these attacks when conditions were unfavourable. Thus, the *Jagdwaaffe* began to lose the tactical initiative it had held for over a year, and it was already clear that to defeat the American daylight attacks the number of interceptions would have to be increased and new tactics developed. To some extent, the

BELOW:
An Fw 190A-3 coded 'Brown 6' of 6./JG 26 being towed to the Staffel repair facilities at Abbeville in the Summer of 1942.



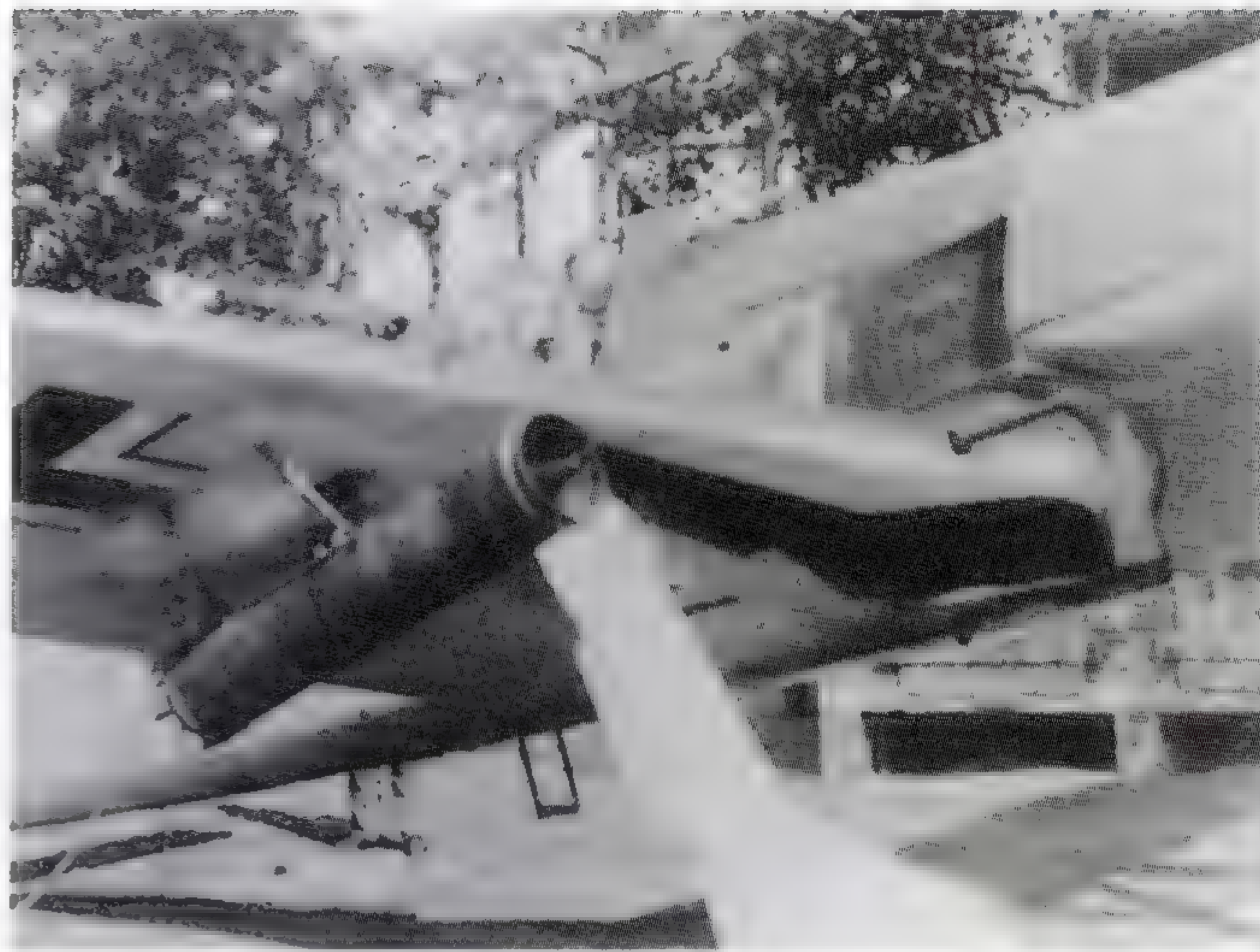
July 1941-August 1943

Luftwaffe was aided in this by the fact that the US heavy bomber threat built up gradually, for at first the B-17s confined their attacks to targets in France, Belgium and Holland. As a result, the German pilots were given some time to accustom themselves to their new adversaries and develop new methods of countering them.

At first, many German pilots were daunted by the bombers' heavy defensive crossfire and broke off their attacks too soon. Attacks were then tried from different directions – quarter, beam, below, etc – and it became clear that crippling a bomber, so that it slowed down and lost the protection of its fellows, brought a greater chance of success. After a month of various methods of attack, it was realised that the B-17s and B-24s were less well defended from the front and, in order to take advantage of the relatively weak defensive fire from that sector, units began to experiment with frontal attacks. A particular exponent of this form of attack was *Hptm.* Egon Mayer, soon to become the *Kommandeur* of III./JG 2 who, together with *Lt.* Georg-Peter Eder, of 7./JG 2, helped to develop the head-on attack which was later to become the preferred method. At the same time, however, the losses inflicted on the four-engined US bombers were far below expectations and many *Jagdflieger* felt that the armament currently installed in their fighters was inadequate. Some units experimented with new weapons, new tactics and minor technical changes in gunsights, and as some of the innovations seemed worth pursuing, Galland decided that a special unit should be set up to deal with such matters on a more official basis. The result was the establishment in 1942 of *Erprobungskommando* 25, commanded by *Major* Heinz Nacke, which developed mountings for various rockets and cannon and experimented with air-to-air bombing, cable bombing and photoelectric cell sights. *EKdo.* 25 had two *Einsatz*, or operational, *Staffeln*, which carried out many missions to test the weapons under combat conditions and achieved some success. One of the most promising weapons tested during the unit's 14-month career was the 21 cm rocket mortar which was mounted beneath the wings of Bf 109s and Fw 190s in launchers nicknamed 'Stovepipes' on account of the tubes from which they were fired.

The high point of the USAAF heavy-bomber effort in 1942 occurred on 9 October when the Eighth Air Force launched a force of 108 B-17 and B-24 bombers to attack targets at Lille in the strongest American attack since operations commenced. As the American formation, now down to 79 bombers due to forced returns, left the target area, they were intercepted by the Fw 190s of III./JG 26 which, led by the *Kommandeur*, *Hptm.* Josef Priller, scrambled from Wevelgem. During the German fighters' sustained and persistent attacks, Priller shot down his 78th victory, a B-24, north of Lille – the first Eighth Air Force B-24 shot down over Europe – while *Oblt.* Kurt Ruppert, *Staffelkapitän* of 9./JG 26 claimed a B-17 shot out of formation and *Hptm.* Klaus Mietusch, *Staffelkapitän* of 7./JG 26, claimed to have separated two more B-17s. Total claims amounted to six four-engined bombers shot down or separated from their formations for the loss of one pilot from 7./JG 26. Not all these claims were confirmed however, and in these attacks only one B-24 and three B-17s were destroyed. On this occasion the fighters had attacked from the rear in pairs, and although the German fighter pilots realised they were hitting the bombers – 46 bombers received varying degrees of damage – their attacks were not succeeding in bringing down the bombers in sufficient numbers.

The head-on attack as proposed by Egon Mayer had already been the subject of considerable discussion among fighter commanders and a perfect opportunity to test the theory arose on 23 November when a force of 36 unescorted bombers attacked the U-boat base at St. Nazaire in France. As the bombers ran in to the target, Fw 190s from *Hptm.* Mayer's III./JG 2 swept in to meet them. Forming up into *Ketten* of three aircraft, the Fw 190s attacked at great speed from dead ahead, fired a no-deflection burst into the bombers' vulnerable frontal areas, and broke away in a climb or half-rolled beneath them. This was the *Luftwaffe's* most successful interception to date and the attacks resulted in four bombers shot down for the loss of a single Fw 190. It was an encouraging success, but the head-on attack involved combined closing speeds in the order of 600 mph and, apart from the obvious danger of collision and sighting difficulties, demanded great skill in gunnery, range estimation and flying control.



ABOVE: During the Autumn of 1942, many Luftwaffe single and twin-engined fighters began to be modified to carry underwing launching tubes for 21 cm Wgr 21 mortars. These unguided missiles could be fired from outside the range of the US bombers defensive fire to break up formations and were intended to increase the fighters' weight of fire without adding cumbersome heavy-calibre guns. The missiles were fused to explode some 1,000 metres in front of the launching aircraft. The Fw 190 A-5s and A-6s of I./JG 1 were equipped with 21 cm mortars in early June and although early results were encouraging, they were removed some weeks later when Allied escort fighters appeared over Europe.

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ABOVE: 'Yellow 9', W.Nr. 9553, the Bf 109 F-2 flown by the Staffelkapitän of 9./JG 2, Oblt. Siegfried Schnell, as it appeared after his 57th victory in May 1942. Note the immaculate appearance of this aircraft, the standard camouflage scheme and the protective paint applied to the wing roots.

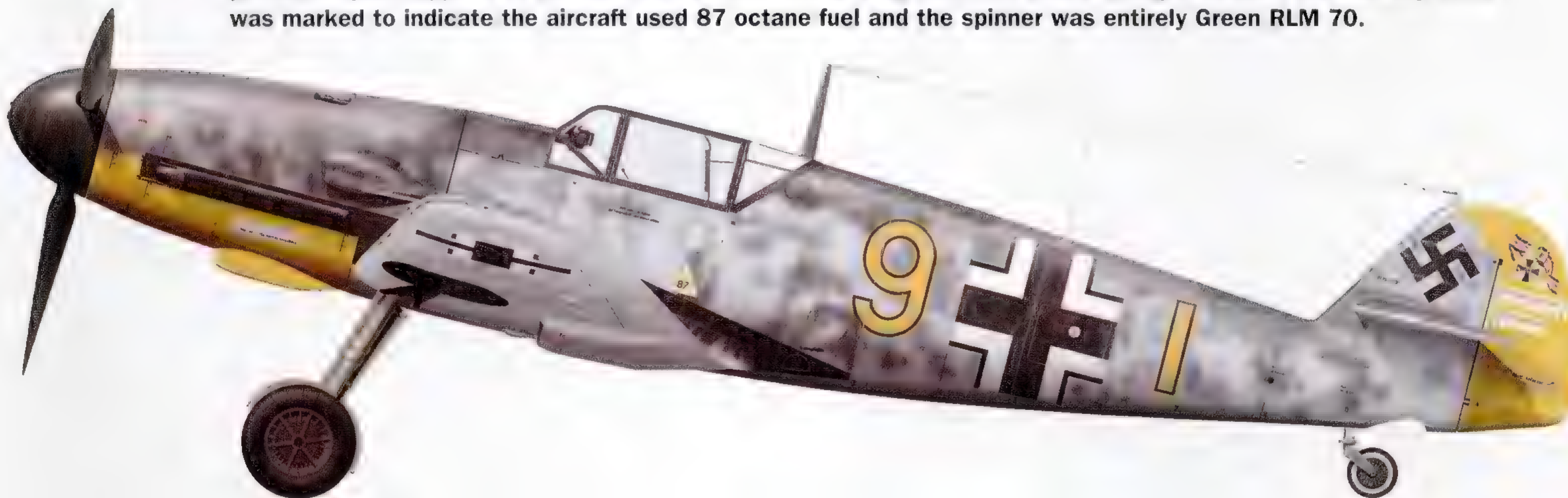


LEFT AND RIGHT: Schnell received the Ritterkreuz on 9 November 1940 after reaching 20 victories. By 8 July 1941 his tally had increased to 40 and the following day he was awarded the Oak Leaves, hence the rudder artwork shown in this closer view of the tail of Schnell's aircraft, to which have been added a further 17 victory bars.

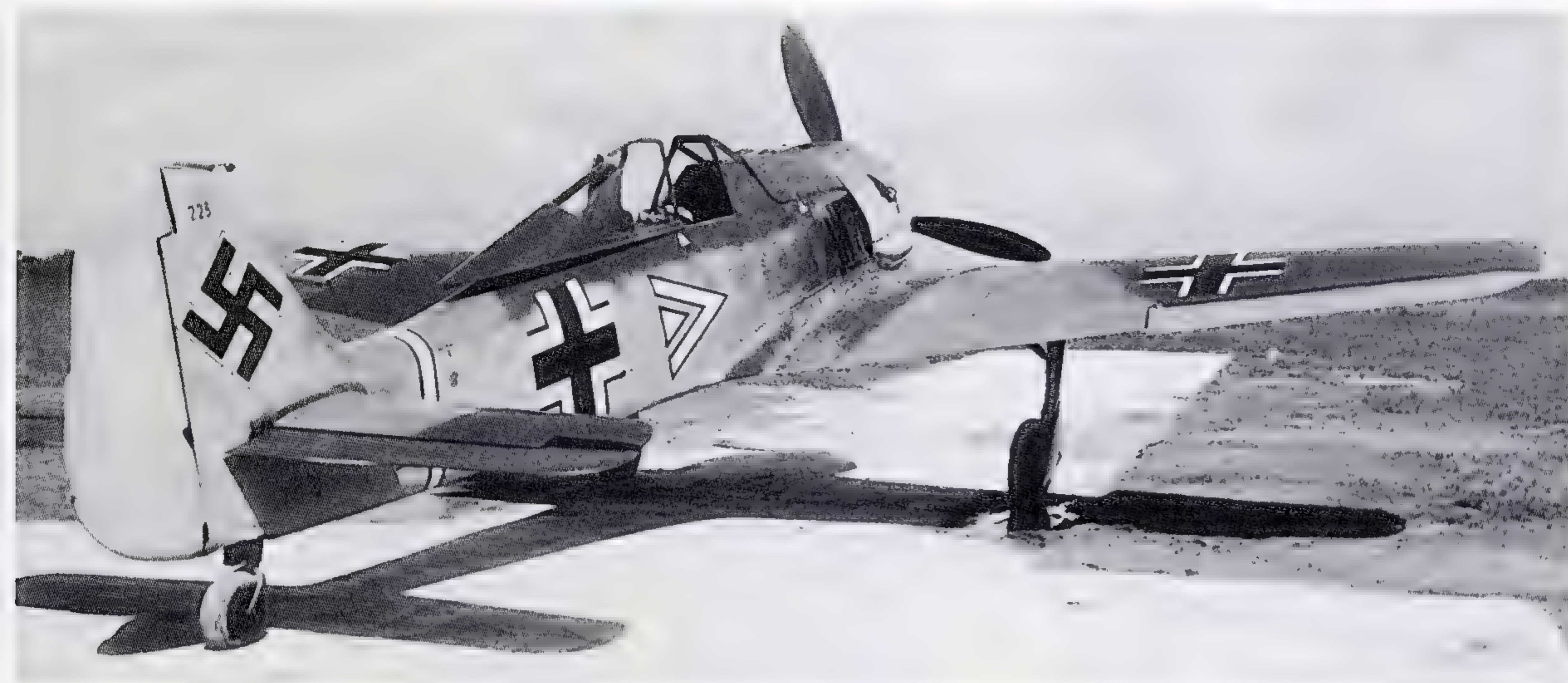


Messerschmitt Bf 109 F-2 flown by Oblt. Siegfried Schnell, Staffelkapitän of 9./JG 2, May 1942

This aircraft, W.Nr. 9552, showed signs of having its earlier all-yellow nose area reduced by respraying with the uppersurface colours 74 and 75. The undersurfaces were RLM 76, and the aircraft had a large area of black protective paint applied to the area of the exhaust and wing root. The yellow triangle beneath the fuel cap cover was marked to indicate the aircraft used 87 octane fuel and the spinner was entirely Green RLM 70.



LEFT: Hauptmann Hans 'Assi' Hahn's Fw 190 A-2, W.Nr. 223 at Beaumont-le-Roger during May of 1942.

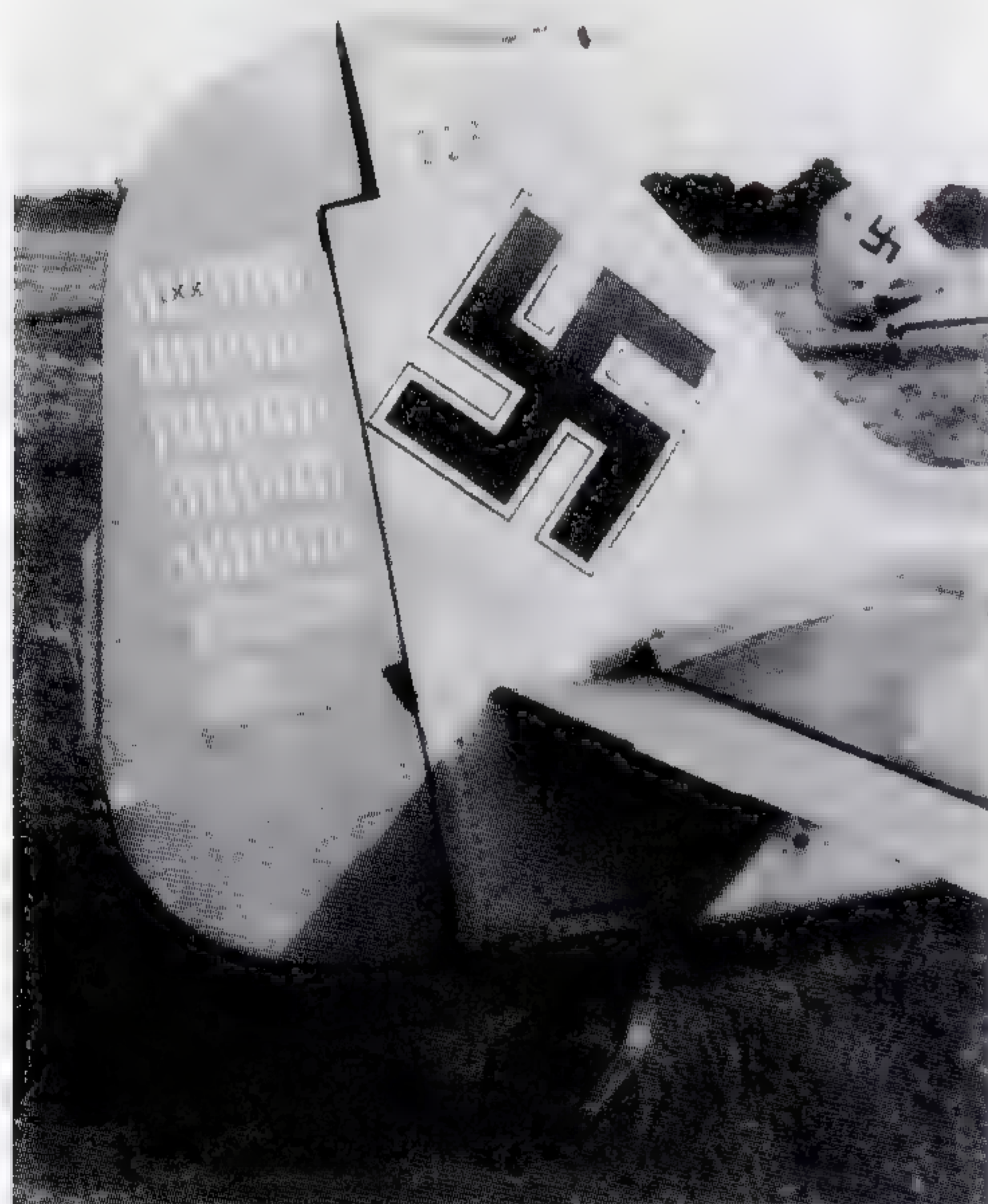


Focke-Wulf Fw 190 A-2 flown by Hptm. Hans 'Assi' Hahn, Kommandeur of III. /JG 2, France, August 1942

This machine, an Fw 190 A-2 W.Nr. 223, was finished in an RLM 74/75/76 scheme and, apart from a small amount of exhaust staining on the fuselage, was in a fairly clean and unweathered condition. The aircraft is shown here marked with 61 victory bars, the last one probably representing one of five Spitfires which Hahn claimed as destroyed on 6 May 1942.



LEFT: A close-up view of Hahn's rudder, now marked with 64 victory bars.



RIGHT: A portrait of Hptm. Hans 'Assi' Hahn, showing the Eichenlaub he received on 14 August 1942 after 42 victories. Hahn originally joined JG 2 'Richthofen' in October 1939 and was appointed Staffelkapitän of 4./JG 2 in December. He was awarded the Ritterkreuz on 24 September 1940 after his 20th victory and became Gruppenkommandeur of III. Gruppe on 29 October, leading this Gruppe in the West until November 1942 when he was transferred to II./JG 54 in Russia.



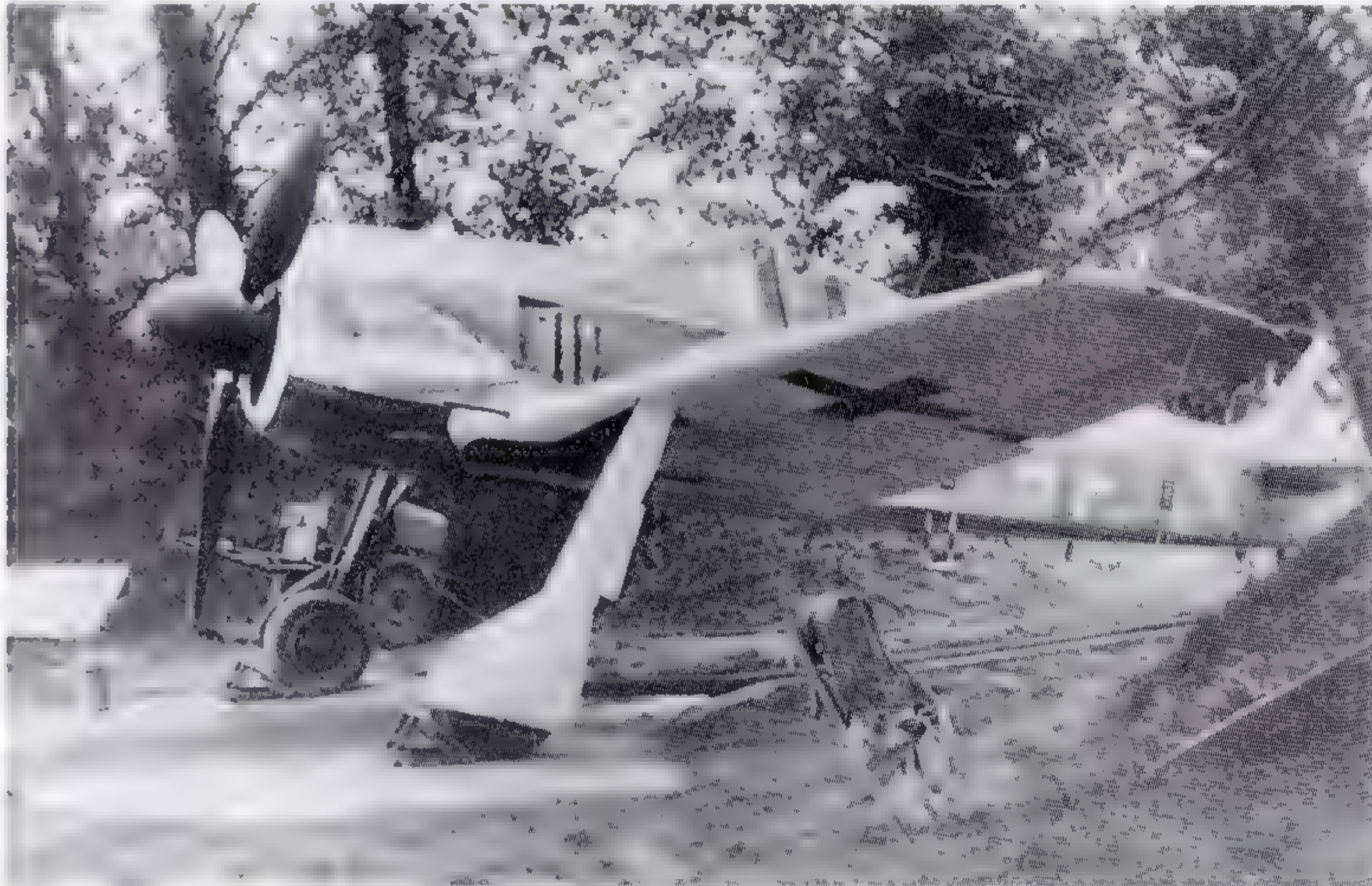
July 1941-August 1943

RIGHT: A recently-delivered Fw 190 A-1, 'Blue 6', W.Nr. 080, of 10.(Jabo)/JG 2 jacked up in flying position to enable the aircraft's weapons to be adjusted.



BELOW: Obgf. Schmaul, a member of 12./JG 1's ground staff, sitting on the wing of a Bf 109 F parked in a blast pen at Mönchen-Gladbach during the Summer of 1942. The 'Devil in the Clouds' emblem of IV. Gruppe, first introduced during 1942, is visible on the nose, while beneath the cockpit is the earlier Maltese Cross emblem, originally of III./JG 1 but later taken over as the Geschwader emblem.

BELOW: For much of 1942 Jagdgeschwader 2 was an Fw 190 unit, the exception being the 11. Staffel which was equipped with Bf 109 G-1s. This Fw 190 A of 9./JG 2 was photographed in its wooded dispersal.



RIGHT: After being injured in November 1940, at which time he was credited with five victories, Josef Wurmheller served for a short time with 5./JG 53 on the Eastern Front where he claimed another nine victories. He returned to the Channel in July 1941 and served briefly with III./JG 2 before being transferred to II. Gruppe and, finally, to 1./JG 2. He received the Ritterkreuz on 4 September 1941 and is pictured here probably in May or June 1942, shortly before I. Gruppe converted to the Fw 190.



July 1941 - August 1943



LEFT: Hptm. Joachim Müncheberg became Kommandeur of III./JG 26 in September 1941 and maintained that appointment until July 1942 when he left the Channel Front to take up positions in the East and, later, in the Mediterranean. In this photograph, Müncheberg is preparing for a flight over the English Channel and as well as wearing an inflatable life jacket, has two bags of yellow dye to mark his position should he come down in the water. The aircraft behind him is his Fw 190 A-2, W.Nr. 0209 and carried the same Stab markings as W.Nr. 257, shown below.



ABOVE AND BELOW LEFT: These photographs, showing Hptm. Müncheberg and another of his Fw 190s, W.Nr. 257, were taken some time after his 77th victory, a Spitfire shot down north-west of Cap Gris-Nez. This aircraft was an Fw 190 A-3 and was originally allocated the Stammkennzeichen PG+GL.



ABOVE: In this closer view of Hptm. Müncheberg he is at Sitzbereitschaft, i.e. seated in his aircraft at readiness, and is connected to flying control by field telephone. The aircraft's engine would already have been warmed up and, should he receive the order for an Alarmstart, or scramble, the pilot could be airborne in 20 to 45 seconds.

Focke-Wulf Fw 190 A-3 W.Nr. 257 flown by Hptm. Joachim Müncheberg, Kommandeur of III./JG 26, May 1942

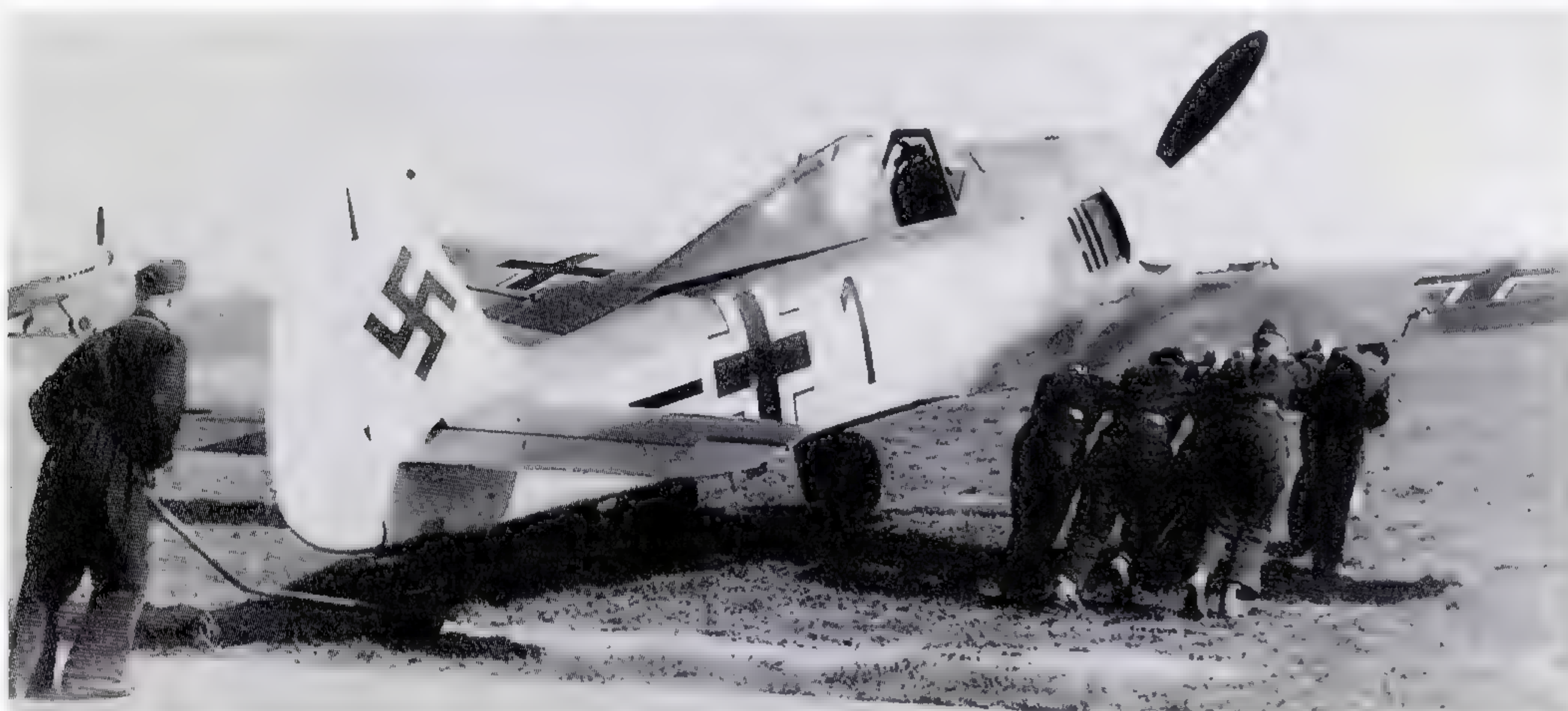
Shown in a camouflage scheme of 74, 75 and 76, this aircraft is a good example of the high demarcation scheme which, as sometimes seen on the Fw 190, has none of the usual fuselage mottling. The shape of the exhaust staining is odd and, in view of the especially pristine appearance of the rest of the fuselage, suggests that perhaps the aircraft has been recently cleaned and the lighter deposits removed. Also unusual is the area of the lower rudder where it would appear an attempt has been made to tone down the yellow identification marking.





LEFT: Believed to have been taken at Coquelles in the early Summer of 1942, the fuselage sides of 'Black 14', an Fw 190 A-2 of 8./JG 2, show patches of darker paint, probably where the Stammkennzeichen has been overpainted. When first recieved by the unit in March 1942, this machine, W.Nr. 346, was flown by Ofw. Rudi Erler but was later passed on to Ofw. Erwin Phillip who was posted missing in this aircraft on 9 October 1942 when engine trouble forced him to make a fatal emergency landing in the sea. The loss report lists the machine as an A-3.

RIGHT: 'Black 11', W.Nr. 2187, another Fw 190 A-3 of 8./JG 2.



LEFT: Ground staff manoeuvring 'Black 1' of 5./JG 2. Lt. Horst Benno Krüger was flying this aircraft, W.Nr. 269, on a sweep over the Channel on 26 July 1942 when he became involved in an air battle with Spitfires and was shot down. Lt. Krüger baled out and parachuted into the sea south of Dungeness. He was rescued by an air-sea rescue launch and taken prisoner, suffering no more than a broken ankle.

RIGHT: An early Fw 190 of 4./JG 26, possibly an A-3 variant, being serviced by Staffel armourers at Abbeville. Note that no outboard cannon have been installed in this aircraft, a not infrequent occurrence as many experienced pilots considered an armament of two 7.9 mm machine-guns in the engine cowling, two MG 151s in the wing roots and two 20 mm cannon outboard in the wings to be unnecessarily heavy and therefore a disadvantage in view of its effect upon climb and manoeuvrability. Later, experience with the American B-17s would result in this opinion being revised and the armament increased.





ABOVE AND LEFT: Ground crew moving 'Black 8', an Fw 190 A-4, from its camouflaged hangar. It is not known whether the leading edge camouflage was applied by the factory which produced the machine or if it was a unit modification. All that can be said is that it appeared on several machines, another example being shown (*LEFT*).



RIGHT: Oblt. Klaus Mietusch, Staffelkapitän of 7./JG 26, standing by the rudder of his Fw 190 A-3 following his 21st and 22nd victories, both Spitfires shot down within minutes of each other off Cap Gris-Nez on 27 August 1942. Mietusch became Kommandeur of III./JG 26 on 5 July 1943. After being decorated with the Ritterkreuz on 26 March 1944, Mietusch was later killed in combat on 17 September and posthumously awarded the Eichenlaub.

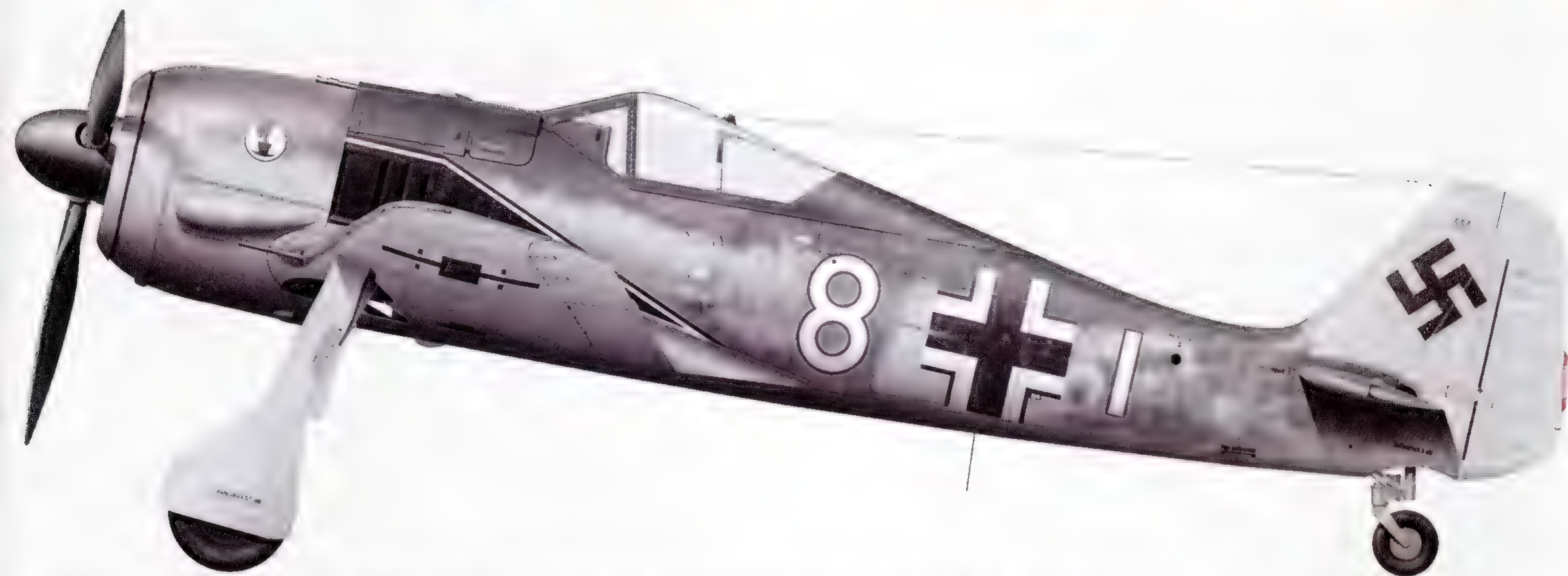




ABOVE:
This Fw 190 A-3 coded 'White 9' was flown by Ofw. Willi Stratmann of 7./JG 2. The Staffel emblem, a thumb squashing a top hat, was designed by Staffel members Ofw. Klee and Lt. Schmidt.



RIGHT: Almost identical to 'White 9' was 'White 11', W.Nr. 105, another Fw 190A-3 of 7./JG 2 photographed at Morlaix during August 1942.



Focke-Wulf Fw 190 A-2 'White 8' flown by Lt. Jacob Augustin of 7./JG 2, June 1942

In standard 74/75/76 camouflage colours, this aircraft shows one of the many variations of the black area applied to conceal exhaust staining. In this case the area covered is quite large, extending back to the trailing edge of the wing root, and has been carefully edged in white and further outlined in black. The rudder of this aircraft, W.Nr. 333, was marked with 12 white victory bars, all topped with roundels to indicate Lt. Augustin's victories over RAF aircraft. The name 'Anni!' was painted under the cockpit.



Emblem of 7./JG 2

BELOW: Pilots of 7./JG 2 run to board their Fw 190 A-2s at Théville during the early Summer of 1942. In JG 2 there were differing states of readiness which were not laid down according to hard and fast rules but varied in each Gruppe. In this case the pilots were probably near enough to their aircraft to be able to take off within a few minutes.

ABOVE: 'White 8', an Fw 190 A-2 W.Nr. 333, was flown by Lt. Jacob Augustin of 7./JG 2 who claimed a run of six Spitfires between the 3rd and 17 June 1942 but was listed missing in action over the Channel while flying another aircraft on 15 July. On 21 October 1942, this machine was being flown by Oblt. Otto Lutter of 8. Staffel when he was shot down and killed during an attack on B-17s.



July 1941-August 1943



LEFT: Ground personnel pushing an Fw 190 A-3 of II./JG 26 into a camouflaged hangar at Abbeville-Drucat, mid-Summer 1942.



BELOW LEFT AND RIGHT AND BOTTOM: This Fw 190 A-2, 'Yellow 13', W. Nr. 325, was flown by Ofw. Josef Heinzeller of 3/JG 2 in the early Summer of 1942. All of Heinzeller's aircraft were named after his pet dog 'Schnauzi' and, as explained in Volume 2, Page 241, carried the dog's name and an appropriate emblem on the engine cowling in white. Just visible (*BELOW LEFT*) is the name 'Old Shap' which was applied below the cockpit, probably in red. On 16 June 1942, Ofw. Heinzeller became involved in an air battle with Spitfires off Portsmouth and his 'Yellow 13' was hit in the engine oil tank. Although Heinzeller succeeded in returning to his base at Triqueville, the entire content of the oil tank was pumped overboard and, by the time he landed, the fuselage was completely covered in oil (*BELOW*). The aircraft was repaired and returned to service, subsequently being transferred to Jagdgruppe West. It was finally written off in 1944 after it was involved in a landing accident and overturned.





ABOVE: An Fw 190 pilot preparing for his next sortie. As the flight will be over the sea, he is wearing an inflatable life jacket.



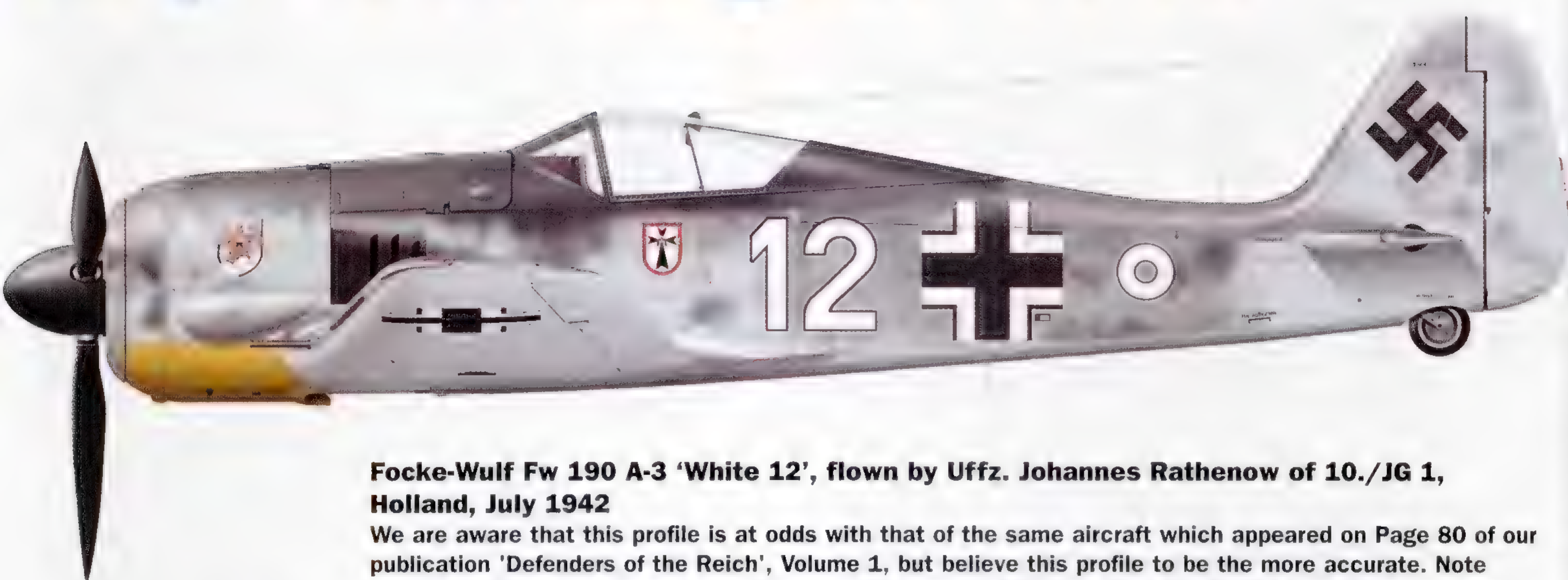
ABOVE RIGHT: German aircrew joked that they were always discovering new pockets in these flight trousers which were indeed characterised by the very distinctive pocket on the front of each leg, large enough to carry maps and a variety of equipment including, as shown here, a flare pistol and a number of flare cartridges.

RIGHT: Another useful survival aid was Scho-Co-Cola, a chocolate bar containing caffeine.



BELOW: Dust rising from the airfield at St. Omer as aircraft from I./JG 26 take off.





Focke-Wulf Fw 190 A-3 'White 12', flown by Uffz. Johannes Rathenow of 10./JG 1, Holland, July 1942

We are aware that this profile is at odds with that of the same aircraft which appeared on Page 80 of our publication 'Defenders of the Reich', Volume 1, but believe this profile to be the more accurate. Note particularly the yellow panel under the aircraft's nose and the way that the 74/75 camouflage colours, probably applied over a light overspray of 02, extend well down the fuselage sides in a low demarcation finish. In contrast, the engine cowling retains a high-demarkation finish. Both unit emblems appeared only on the port side.



THIS PAGE: Taken in July 1942, these photographs show 'White 12', W.Nr. 437, a Fw 190 A-3 flown by Uffz. Johannes Rathenow (*ABOVE*) of 10./JG 1. This aircraft was fitted with a FuG 25 radio, the rod antenna for which extends from the underside of the fuselage approximately in line with the centre of the fuselage cross. On 4 July 1942, Rathenow gained the distinction of scoring the first victory for IV./JG 1 when he shot down a Boston medium bomber, one of a force attacking the airfield at Bergen-op-Zoom. His aircraft is seen (*BELOW RIGHT*) upon his return from this action.



RIGHT: Egon Mayer was born in Constance on 18 August 1917. He joined the Luftwaffe as a Fahnenjunker in the Autumn of 1937 and was commissioned on the outbreak of war in September 1939. His first kill was a Morane, which he shot down on 13 June 1940 when with 6./JG 2 during the French campaign. On 3 September 1940, Lt. Mayer claimed a Spitfire as his second victory and claimed his fourth and fifth victories, both Spitfires, in June 1941. After this slow start, Mayer's victories increased and within two months his victories had increased to 20. He was awarded the Ritterkreuz on 1 August 1941.



BELOW AND BELOW RIGHT: By June 1942, Oblt. Egon Mayer, then Staffelkapitän of 7./JG 2, had increased his victory tally to 54, as shown in this photograph of his Fw 190 A, 'White 7'. Interestingly, unlike most other victory markings which were applied as black or white bars, Mayer's were in the form of national insignia only. At this time, Mayer had not yet destroyed a US four-engined heavy bomber, but he later became known among other pilots of 7./JG 2 as the "Fortress specialist", eventually accounting for 25 of these machines. Note also that in this photograph the aircraft still retains the Staffel's top hat emblem, replaced in late 1942 by the cock's head emblem of III. Gruppe when, Hptm. "Assi" Hahn became Kommandeur.



Focke-Wulf Fw 190 A 'White 7' flown by Oblt. Egon Mayer, Staffelkapitän of 7./JG 2, Théville, June 1942

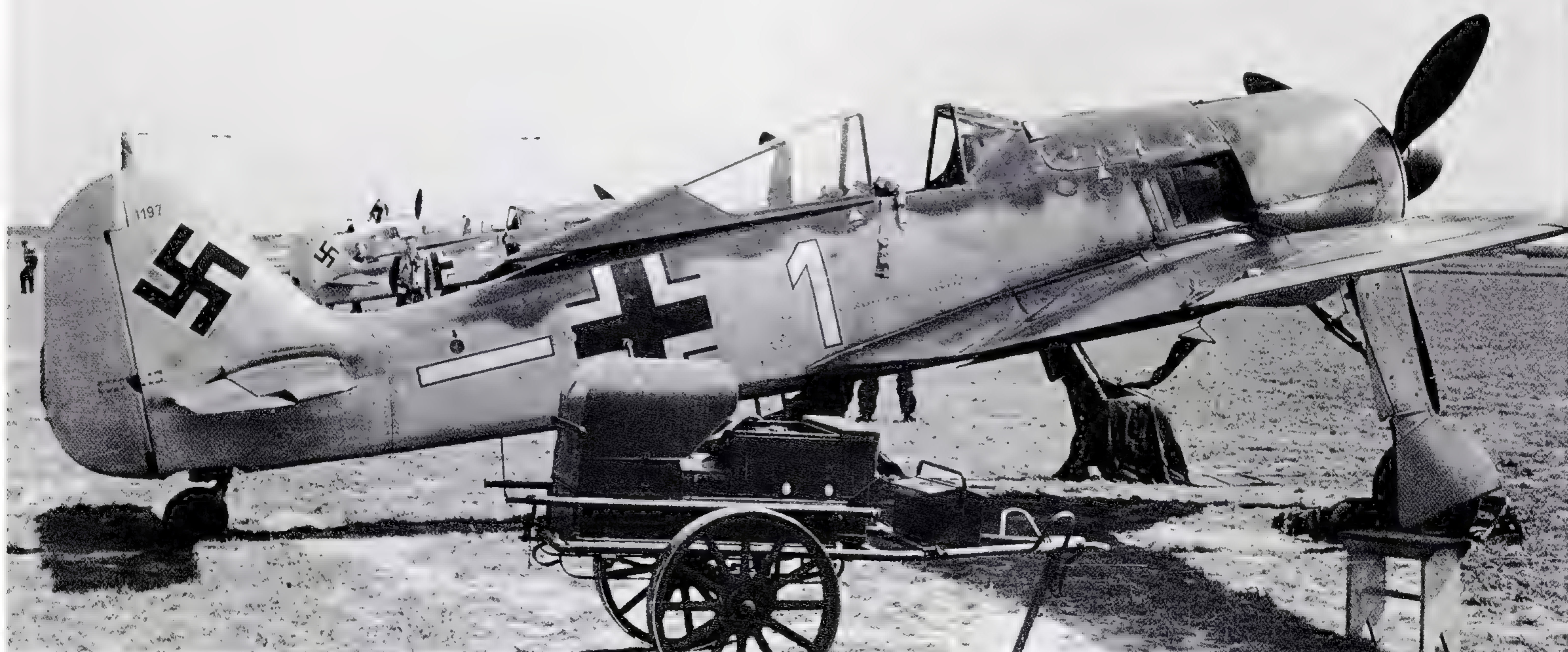
This was another aircraft finished in a low demarcation scheme of 74 and 75 over 76 undersurfaces. The exhaust area, outlined in white and edged in black, is typical of 7. Staffel's aircraft in mid-1942, but the application of roundels rather than full victory bars on the rudder, is unusual. On the spine of this aircraft, the 75 is slightly darker than normal, probably due to an overspray of 74.



RIGHT: As anyone who has conducted interviews with former Luftwaffe aircrew knows, most pilots took little interest in the technical details of their machines and even less in camouflage and markings. However, there were exceptions, this pilot showing a commendable degree of interest in the front end of his Fw 190, probably an A-3.



BELOW: This Fw 190 A-5, W.Nr. 1197 coded 'White 1', was flown by Oblt. Otto Stammberger who, from 26 February 1943 until wounded on 13 May 1943, was the Staffelkapitän of 4./JG 26. On that date, elements of JG 26 were scrambled to intercept a large formation of aircraft but were recalled when the formation proved to consist only of six B-25s escorted by 15 Spitfires. Because of a defective radio, Stammberger, flying a different machine from that shown here, failed to hear the recall order and, in the following confusion, was attacked by the Spitfires and shot down in flames. Stammberger was still in his aircraft when the fuel tank exploded and although he baled out, his parachute was burned and he struck the ground hard, suffering concussion as well as burns, and remained unconscious for ten days. Upon recovery, he was declared unfit for further combat flying.





LEFT: An air-to-air view of an early Fw 190 showing the uppersurface camouflage pattern and early-style upperwing Balkenkreuze.

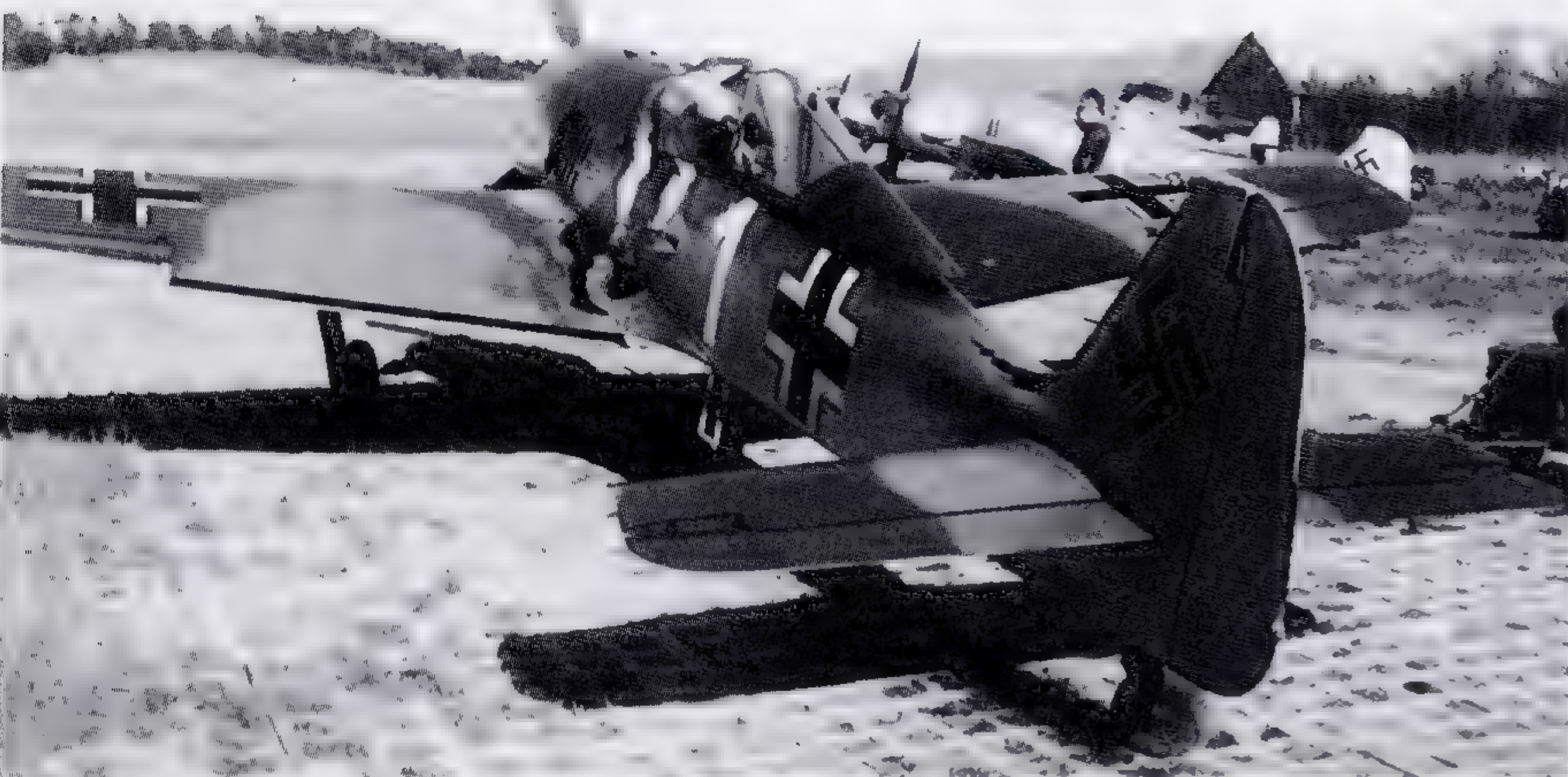
BELOW LEFT AND BELOW RIGHT: Although the demarcation lines in the uppersurface camouflage pattern varied in position and style, the upper wing surface areas were always covered by about 50% each of the colours 74 and 75. These views show an Fw 190 A-3 at Strassbourg (*BELOW*) with later, outline style Balkenkreuze, and another aircraft (*LEFT*), apparently of IV./JG 5, which suffered a landing mishap at Aalborg-East in Denmark in September 1942. Note, however, that parts of the wing area on both aircraft have been resprayed in at least one additional colour, probably as a result of repairs. It is not known if there was any particular reason why the IV./JG 5 aircraft had a number following the Balkenkreuz.



LEFT: 'White 14', an Fw 190 A-2 or A-3 of JG 2 undergoing maintenance in a wooded area on the edge of a French airfield in late 1942. Camouflage netting has been heaped onto the port wing.

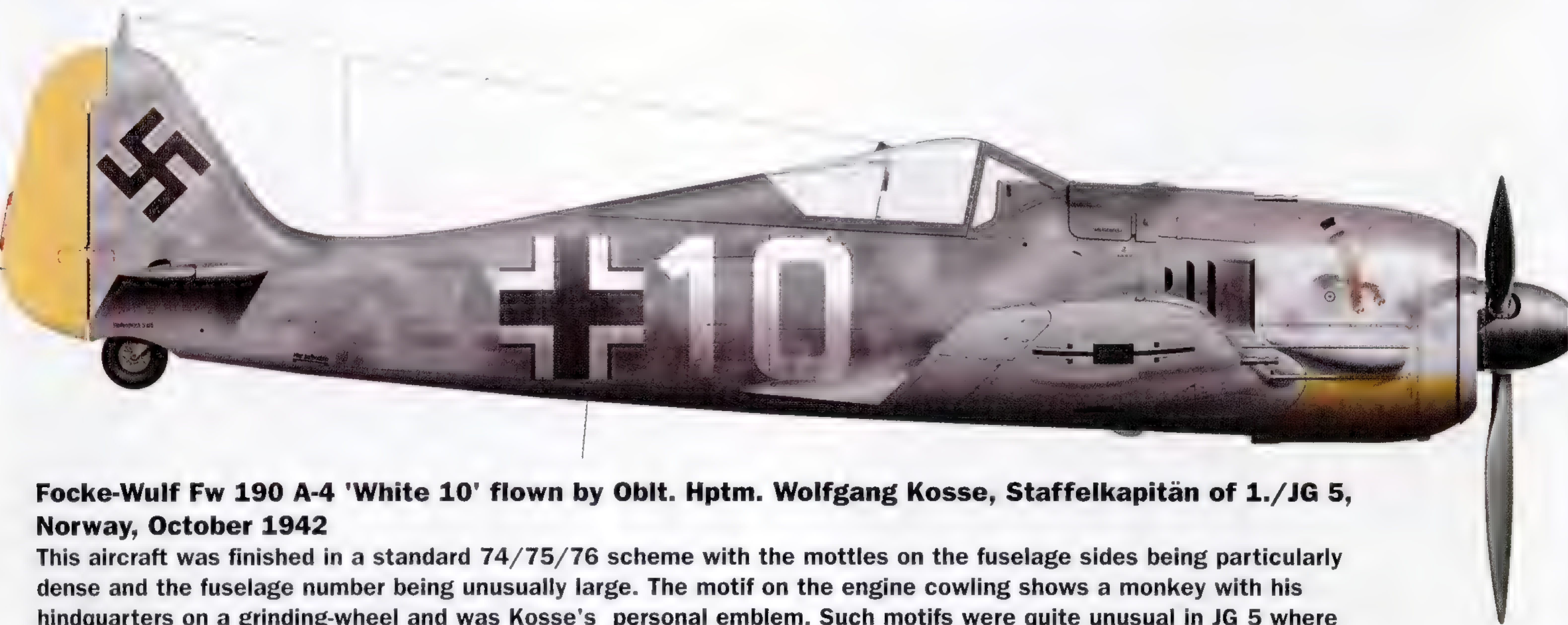
July 1941-August 1943

LEFT: This Fw 190 A-3, 'White 1', was flown by the Staffelkapitän of 1./JG 5 and was probably photographed at Herdla in Norway in the late Summer of 1942. When JG 5 was formed in early 1942, the I. Gruppe was at first raised by redesignating 1./JG 77. Later, when two further Gruppen were raised to expand the Geschwader, the original 1./JG 5 was redesignated 6./JG 5 and a new 1. Staffel was formed by redesignating 10./JG 1. At first the I. Gruppe was equipped with Bf 109 E-7s, and from the Spring of 1942 flew Bf 109 F-2s until June when it re-equipped with the Fw 190. The full Werk Nummer of this particular machine was 130332, but only the last three digits appeared on the tail and, although the original factory code allocated to this machine was CM+EB, it is unlikely that this remained under the wings once the aircraft was accepted by 1./JG 5. This aircraft was 35 per cent damaged in a take-off accident at Kjevik on 27 November 1942.



Personal emblem of Oblt.
Hptm. Wolfgang Kosse

ABOVE: After having flown the outmoded Bf 109 E long after other units had converted to more modern versions, JG 5 eventually re-equipped with the Fw 190 in June 1942. The first part of the Geschwader to convert was IV./JG 5, followed in July by 3./JG 5 with the rest of I. Gruppe converting about a month later. This particular aircraft, an Fw 190 A-4, 'White 10' of 1. Staffel, was flown by Hptm. Wolfgang Kosse and was photographed at Oslo-Fornebu in Norway in October 1942. Kosse had previously served with JG 26 and had ten victories when, in May 1942, he was transferred to a gunnery course. On completion, he was transferred to 1./JG 5 where he became its Staffelkapitän. In June 1943, Kosse became Staffelkapitän of 5./JG 5 but, in November, he was relieved of his command and demoted for making an unauthorised flight during which he damaged an aircraft. In January 1944, Kosse volunteered to serve with Sturmstaffel 1 and flew Reichsverteidigung duties with this unit and also with JG 3, subsequently becoming Staffelkapitän of 13./JG 3. His final victory tally is not known, sources varying between 20 and 46, but the correct figure is believed to have been around 28. Hptm. Kosse was shot down by a Tempest and killed on 24 December 1944.



Focke-Wulf Fw 190 A-4 'White 10' flown by Oblt. Hptm. Wolfgang Kosse, Staffelkapitän of 1./JG 5, Norway, October 1942

This aircraft was finished in a standard 74/75/76 scheme with the mottles on the fuselage sides being particularly dense and the fuselage number being unusually large. The motif on the engine cowling shows a monkey with his hindquarters on a grinding-wheel and was Kosse's personal emblem. Such motifs were quite unusual in JG 5 where even Gruppe or Staffel badges were rare. The RLM 70 spinner had a white tip.

July 1941-August 1943



Messerschmitt Bf 109 F-4 of Stab, II./JG 2, late 1942

This Bf 109 F-4 was finished in the usual scheme of the period, consisting of 74/75/76 camouflage colours with yellow identification areas under the nose and on the rudder, but had an interesting set of Stab markings in black edged in white.

RIGHT AND FAR RIGHT: Believed to have been photographed in late 1942 when the Gruppe was converting to the Fw 190, this Bf 109 F-4 belonged to the Stab of II/JG 2. Also shown are the Fw 190s of 6./JG 2 which at that time was commanded by Ritterkreuzträger Lt. Erich Rudorffer (*FAR RIGHT*).



LEFT: When Adolf Galland took over the position of General der Jagdflieger, Hptm. Gerhard Schöpfel, the Kommandeur of III./JG 26, was promoted to Major and became the new Kommodore. Major Schöpfel led the Geschwader until 10 January 1943 when he transferred to Jafü Brittany as Operations Officer.

BELOW: Major Gerhard Schöpfel of JG 26 and his Fw 190 A-2, believed photographed at St. Omer. There is evidence to suggest that the paint finish on licence-built airframes was inferior to that on machines produced by Focke-Wulf and, despite the disadvantage of the aircraft reflecting sunlight and being more easily seen, a number of pilots had their aircraft rubbed down and polished in order to gain an increase in speed of some 10 to 15 km/h. The glare off the forward fuselage and the reflection in the wing in this photograph certainly suggests that Schöpfel's machine received such treatment. The Stab markings on the fuselage side are those of the Geschwaderkommodore. Schöpfel survived the war with 40 victories, all achieved in the West.



ABOVE: With his back to the camera, Lt. Horst Hannig, the Staffelkapitän of 2./JG 2, briefs his pilots in February 1943. In the background is Hannig's Fw 190 A-4, 'Black 1', W.Nr. 734, showing the unit's large eagle insignia and yellow rudder. Hannig was flying this aircraft on 15 May 1943 when an RAF 'Circus' targeted Caen as a diversion for B-17s heading across the North Sea to bomb Heligoland and Emden. The 'Circus' was intercepted by I./JG 2 near Caen and, in the ensuing air battle, the Gruppe claimed six victories but lost four pilots, one being Hannig who baled out wounded, but he was not seen again and, presumably, fell to his death.



Georg-Peter Eder

Nicknamed 'Schorch' by his colleagues, Georg-Peter Eder was born at Oberdachstetten, near Frankfurt, on 8 March 1921. Following a typical high-school education, Eder entered the *Luftwaffe* as a 17-year old *Fabnenjunker* in October 1938 and after basic training was assigned for flying training at Berlin-Gatow on 1 April 1939. A year later, Eder had received his flying certificate and was posted to *Jagdfliegerschule* 1 at Werneuchen for final fighter pilot training.

On 1 September, Eder was posted to his first operational unit, 1./JG 51, then operating in the Calais area of France. This was the height of the Battle of Britain, but although Eder flew many missions and although he benefited from unhurried, almost peacetime training and, with JG 51, flew in the company of experienced operational pilots, he failed to score any victories himself and it was not until soon after he had been transferred to 4./JG 51, that he claimed his first, an RAF Spitfire, on 7 May 1941.

In June, JG 51 was transferred to Poland to support the invasion of Russia and subsequently operated on the central sector of the front around Bobruisk, Bryansk, Smolensk and Moscow. Eder's tally of victories on the Russian Front opened on the morning of the first day of the invasion, 22 June 1941, when he shot down an I-16 and, 12 minutes later, an SB bomber. By 24 July, Eder had seven victories to his credit, but on that date he was shot down for the first time and slightly wounded. He would be shot down and wounded many more times before the final surrender in May 1945.

Back in the air on 31 July 1941 Eder destroyed an I-16 and claimed another, his tenth victory, on 9 August, but a collision at Ponyatovka ended his flying for a while. Ponyatovka was a busy, major air base situated south of Smolensk and on 22 August, Eder's Bf 109 F-2, W.Nr. 9184, collided with a Ju 52 transport aircraft. Eder was seriously injured in the crash, suffering a fracture at the base of his skull, and spent the next three months in hospital. As from 1 November 1941, he then spent exactly a year as an instructor with *Jagdfliegerschule* 2 at Zerbst.



On 1 November 1942, Eder was posted to 7./JG 2 'Richthofen' in France and with this unit he participated in the growing battle against the American four-engined heavy bombers, claiming his first B-17 on 30 December 1942 and a further two before the end of January 1943. Together with *Hptm.* Egon Mayer, his *Gruppenkommandeur*, Eder helped develop the tactics to combat the formations of B-17s and B-24s. As experience in dealing with the *Viermots* was gathered, it was realised that the volume of defensive fire from the front of the bomber formation was weaker than from the rear, frequently only the B-17 upper gunner being able to respond to frontal attacks. Various theories were put forward to exploit this weakness and, after some trial and error involving level attacks, it was realised that the best form of attack was from the front and above. In such attacks, the combined closing speeds increased

the velocity of the fighters' armament and, compared with attacks from the rear, allowed the bombers' gunners minimum firing time. Properly carried out, the results of these attacks were frequently successful, but they required a great deal of courage on the part of the German pilots and imposed a severe strain on their nerves.

Eder's 15th victory, however, was not another B-17 but a Spitfire, shot down on 13 February, after which he was appointed *Staffelkapitän* of 12./JG 2 and accounted for another three Spitfires. On 28 March, he destroyed another B-17, his fourth, but the engine of his aircraft was damaged and, while attempting to land his Bf 109 G-4, W.Nr. 14998 at Beaumont-le-Roger, his aircraft somersaulted and he was wounded again. After returning to action, he destroyed a P-47 on 13 May and continued to score steadily, destroying his 20th enemy aircraft on 29 May. After shooting down a P-47 and forcing a B-17 out of formation on 30 July, his victory total reached 31 victories, and on 31 August 1943 he received the German Cross in Gold. Transferring to 5./JG 2 on 5 September, *Oblt.* Eder continued to battle against the four-engined bombers but on 5 November he was forced to bale out of his Bf 109 G-6 W.Nr. 20733 and injured yet again.

After leaving hospital in March 1944, *Oblt.* Eder was transferred to JG 1 which, during 1943, had formed the backbone of Home Defence in countering the American daylight bombers and, in the two and a half months before Eder's arrival, had lost three *Staffelkapitäne*. Taking over the Fw 190-equipped



ABOVE: Lt. Eder with his Rottenflieger (left) after destroying a four-engined bomber.

6. *Staffel*, he had not been there long when he was shot down on 19 April, but by the end of the month he had recorded nine victories, five being US four-engined B-17 and B-24 bombers, one a B-17 forced out of formation and three were P-47s. On 8 May he downed a B-24 but was hit and had to make an emergency landing, and on the 29th, after shooting down another two B-24s and three US fighters, he destroyed a B-17 but collided with another aircraft on landing.

On 6 June 1944, the Allies landed in France and II./JG 1, to which Eder's 6. *Staffel* belonged, was transferred from Störmede to the Normandy Invasion Front. By the 24 June, when he received a well-deserved *Ritterkreuz*, Eder had a total of 50 victories, the last being a P-47 shot down near Le Mans on the 21st. He was then transferred to II./JG 26 and took over temporary command of 6. *Staffel*, with which – in addition to aerial combats – he flew strafing and mortar attacks against American spearheads nearing Paris. It was during one such attack near Rambouillet on 17 August that Eder was apparently involved in an unusual incident. Shortly before noon, he is reported to have shot down a Spitfire which crashed between two Sherman tanks, destroying them both. Almost immediately afterwards, he shot down another Spitfire which is also reported to have crashed onto a third Sherman, destroying that as well. Unfortunately, however, it has so far proved impossible to confirm these details.

On 4 September, Eder became *Kommandeur* of II./JG 26, but on 8 October he was ordered to report to *Erprobungskommando* 262, later redesignated *Kommando Nowotny* which, as the first operational Me 262 fighter unit, was responsible for flying combat sorties in order to develop tactics. Remarkably, on 12 September, soon after he had taken command of the 1. *Staffel*, Eder claimed two B-17s destroyed and another probably destroyed, following up this success by destroying another two B-17s plus a probable a few days later. When *Kommando Nowotny* was again redesignated as JG 7 on 19 November 1944, Eder's 1./Kdo *Nowotny* became 9./JG 7. He continued to command the unit and fly the Me 262 in combat with considerable success, adding numerous B-17s as well as P-38s and P-51s to his score until, on 25 November, with a total of 60 victories, Eder's achievement was recognised with the award of the Oak Leaves. During the Ardennes offensive, Eder flew Me 262 ground-attack sorties and, in the early weeks of 1945, added further B-17s to his score.

On 17 February 1945, Eder took off from Parchim with two comrades to intercept a bomber formation over northern Germany. They encountered the enemy formation south of Bremen, but as they prepared to attack they were met by the defensive fire of hundreds of guns which hit Eder's machine and set his left wing and engine on fire. He baled out but was struck by a part of the aircraft, injuring his head and left leg. As a result, he did not return to operations until April 1945 but succeeded in destroying another B-17 on the 17th as his 78th and final victory.

At the end of the war, the Allies were especially interested in *Luftwaffe* PoWs who had experience with the Me 262 and *Major* Eder was taken to England for special interrogation. After the cumulative mental strain of five years of almost continuous combat, the intense and sometimes heavy-handed questioning proved too much for Eder's nerves and after two weeks he experienced a nervous breakdown. After ten days of treatment, the British interrogators gave up on him and he was shipped back via Calais and Lille to Bad Kreuznach in Germany.

For Georg-Peter Eder, it had been a long war with a bitter ending. He had flown a total of 572 combat sorties of which 150 were with the Me 262. On the Eastern Front he had scored ten victories and another 68 on the Western Front, of which no fewer than 36 were four-engined bombers, making him the leading scorer against the *Viermots*. Although a number of his later victories were not officially confirmed, he is believed to have scored at least 24 victories with the Me 262. During his flying career, he was shot down 17 times, baled out nine times and was wounded on 14 occasions.

Malnourished and seriously underweight, Eder spent a long period convalescing until, on 6 March 1946, he was finally released. Returning to his home in Frankfurt, *Major a.D.* Georg-Peter Eder set about rebuilding his life and became a successful businessman. He died in Wiesbaden on 11 March 1986, aged 65 years.



BELOW: Oblt. Georg-Peter Eder, *Staffelkapitän* of 12./JG 2, describing a combat mission to Uffz. Koall.

Hit-and-Run

Meanwhile, the volume of hit-and-run attacks carried out by JG 2 and JG 26 against Southern England steadily grew. In July 1942 there were 19 attacks in which the total number of recorded *Jabo* sorties rose to 115. The 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 26 took its Fw 190s into action for the first time on 11 July when two aircraft, each carrying a single 250 kg bomb, attacked Royal Navy minesweepers off Dartmouth. Although causing only very slight damage, the attack by one of the aircraft was described in a British report as “very accurate”. The following day, two attacks by bomb-carrying Fw 190s were reported. In the first, carried out in the early afternoon, two Fw 190s bombed and sank a minesweeper at Brixham and made off after opening fire with cannon and machine guns on a trawler off the coast. In the second attack, a patrol vessel was damaged in the entrance to Dartmouth and three motor launches just off the coast were each attacked by a pair of bomb-carrying Fw 190s which also opened fire with cannon.

The increase in *Jabo* activity showed that the *Luftwaffe* regarded this form of attack as a paying proposition. They were, indeed, the obvious answer to the lack of heavy bomber aircraft and due to the tactics employed, losses were light. However, during an operation on 17 July, the *Staffelkapitän* of 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 2, the recently-promoted *Hptm.* Liesendahl, was shot down by ships’ guns and killed. On 6 September, a badly decomposed body was picked up from the sea six miles east of Beachy Head. The body was identified as that of Liesendahl, and among the personal effects were his decorations: an Iron Cross First Class and a German Cross in Gold which he had been awarded on 5 June. Liesendahl was awarded a posthumous *Ritterkreuz* on 4 September and, although not a particularly well-known personality, he had a great reputation in his own *Staffel* which, because of the publicity it received in newspapers and on the wireless, had become known as ‘the Liesendahl *Staffel*’. Although other pilots within JG 2 generally felt that the operations of the *Jabo Staffel* were fairly successful, *Jabo* work was not popular and inducements in the form of decorations were provided as an incentive for fighter pilots to volunteer. In fact, a total of six German Crosses in Gold were awarded to 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 2 pilots between June 1942 and May 1943 and, in view of the acknowledged hazardous nature of their missions, most of the recipients’ contemporaries considered the decoration well earned.

Other attacks over or near the coast were carried out by small numbers of *Jabos* on most days in the first half of July. Targets included shipping off The Needles on 7 July, Friston aerodrome on the 9th, and three further attacks were made on shipping near Dartmouth and Brixham on the 11th and 12th. Intercepting these attacks was still a problem for the RAF since, apart from flying at extremely low level to avoid radar detection, the fighter-bombers were well-camouflaged and, when flying at sea level, they were difficult to detect, particularly in hazy weather.

On 12 July, *Hptm.* Karl Plunser, *Staffelkapitän* of 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 26, left the *Geschwader* and was replaced by *Oblt.* Hans Geburtig. Less than two weeks later, however, on 30 July, Geburtig was shot down while attacking a stationary collier in Littlehampton harbour. The aircraft attacked from a height of 140 feet, and although the bombs missed their target they exploded close enough to cause slight damage and two members of the ship’s crew were wounded by machine-gun bullets. The collier returned fire with its twin machine guns and claimed to have shot down one of the aircraft, that flown by Geburtig, which crashed into the sea. The aircraft sank immediately, but Geburtig managed to struggle to the surface and was picked up by a launch. He was succeeded as *Staffelkapitän* by *Oblt.* Paul Keller.

Attacks on coastal towns, communications and harbours continued, but the most tempting and the most frequently attacked targets were the many gasholders which dotted the South Coast, the coast of Sussex being the most heavily raided area. Again there was further evidence of careful target planning. For example, two Fw 190s attacked the radar station at Ventnor on 21 July and a similar raid was made on the radio station at Tralaever on 17 August. In fact, in terms of sorties and attacks, August proved to be the peak month of the year when 36 separate *Jabo* raids were recorded against land targets in southern coastal districts.

On the morning of 1 August, two Fw 190s from 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 26 were ordered to attack Newhaven. After releasing their bombs, the two aircraft, flown by *Ofw.* Karl Knobloch and *Oblt.* Arnd Flock, were intercepted off Shoreham at 200 feet by a section of Spitfires on patrol. One Fw 190 was shot down off Newhaven and exploded on hitting the water. The body of the pilot, *Lt.* Flock, was picked up from the sea soon afterwards. In another morning attack on 26 August, two Fw 190s from 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 26, each loaded with a single SC 250 bomb, took off from Abbeville to bomb the factory area on the eastern outskirts of Eastbourne. Flown by *Ofw.* Werner Kassa and *Ogfr.* Richard Wittmann, the two aircraft crossed the Channel very fast and at wave-top height to avoid radar detection. They achieved

complete surprise, arriving unannounced with a brief burst of cannon and machine-gun fire. Both aircraft released their bombs and caused considerable damage, but as they banked away to head back out to sea, the lead aircraft, flown by *Ofw.* Kassa, was seen to falter in the air, turned completely upside down and crashed inverted into a dyke. Kassa's body was not recovered until the following day.

Between June and August 1942, Fighter Command flew 11,837 daylight interception patrols but did not succeed in definitely destroying a single enemy low-level raider. The RAF badly needed a fighter with a good low-altitude performance, but the main reason for the general failure to affect interceptions was that low-level attacks were not detected by the radar chain. On 6 July, for example, two Spitfire Vs intercepted and chased a Bf 109 F from 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 2 for 20 miles without being able to overtake it. Fighter Command tried Mustangs from Army Co-operation Command to improve interceptions and two squadrons were allocated to cover the South Coast, particularly the stretch between Eastbourne and Shoreham.

Apart from the increase in *Jabo* sorties, equally disturbing for Fighter Command was the increasing use of the Fw 190 as a fighter-bomber, 68 Fw 190 sorties being recorded in August against 19 by Bf 109s, but one important improvement for the RAF was that there was now an increased supply of Spitfire IXs. These aircraft were capable of fighting the Fw 190 on approximately equal terms although the Fw 190 invariably maintained the advantage at low level. On 1 July, only eight MK IXs had been delivered to squadrons, but by the end of the month supplies had allowed three squadrons to be equipped and by the end of August there were five squadrons.

After a reduction in the number of sorties flown against Britain in September 1942, the German offensive freshened in October. Kent instead of Sussex became the area most frequently raided by Fw 190s which had now almost completely replaced the Bf 109, and during September and October, Fighter Command claimed the destruction of 13 Fw 190s engaged in attacking South Coast targets. This was a definite improvement on the interception results for the previous period and another two Fw 190s were destroyed by anti-aircraft fire. The majority of these losses were inflicted during October after several improvements had been carried out in the air defence of the South Coast, one of the most important of which was the assignment of Typhoon squadrons to counter the hit-and-run raiders and the commencement of standing patrols by Spitfire, Mustang and Typhoon aircraft.

The patrolling fighters were stationed over the English Channel in all weathers from dawn till dusk in an attempt to engage the intruders before they reached their objective. Even then, they were not immediately effective and stood little chance of successfully engaging the intruders which were frequently concealed in the cover of low cloud and poor weather. Even if sighted, the Fw 190s superior performance often allowed them to outdistance the then current Spitfire V; in fact four Spitfires were shot down by Fw 190s during the period.

Chief reliance for improving results was therefore placed upon the Typhoons, but between 22 September, when the patrols started, and the end of November, only one out of 170 low-flying raiders was destroyed by aircraft on standing patrols. The sole success was achieved on 17 October when a *Schwarm* of Fw 190s from 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 26 was intercepted after attacking Hastings and *Fw.* Karl Niesel was shot down into the sea.

The Attack on Canterbury

Although most hit-and-run attacks were carried out by small formations, larger formations were employed on special occasions. The most serious such attack was the major *Jabo* raid on Canterbury on 31 October, for which 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 2 and 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 26, mustering 19 serviceable aircraft between them, were reinforced by 49 aircraft from II./JG 2, I./JG 26 and part of III./JG 26, hurriedly equipped with bomb racks especially for the occasion. However, because some of the pilots were inexperienced in the *Jabo* role, and because of the distance to be flown over land, the *Jabos* were to be escorted by Fw 190 fighters from II./JG 2 and II. and part of III./JG 26. This brought the total escort to 62 fighters, the maximum number which could be provided whilst still leaving sufficient aircraft for home defence



ABOVE: In September 1942, although the British coastal light anti-aircraft batteries were achieving some success against the hit-and-run raiders, the RAF was once again forced to resort to the wasteful system of mounting standing fighter patrols with the resultant wear and tear on machines and pilot fatigue. In addition, special squadrons were based as near as possible to the most frequently attacked targets and maintained the highest state of readiness with a section of two aircraft on the ground at cockpit readiness and another section out on patrol. Spitfires rarely met with any success, but results improved with the introduction of the Typhoon. The Typhoon had at first been chiefly employed on low altitude anti-shiping sweeps, in which role it had not proved particularly successful, but its speed and fire-power obviously pointed to it being more suitable to deal with the hit-and-run attacks. These squadrons were therefore redeployed and began flying standing patrols together with Spitfire and Mustang squadrons. The black and white stripes under the wings were intended as an aid to avoid confusion with the similar silhouette of the Fw 190.

during the operation. Some of the aircraft originally detailed as *Jabos*, but subsequently ordered to fly close escort, still had their bomb racks fitted.

The *Jabos*, each of which was loaded with a single 500 kg bomb fitted with a short delay fuse, joined up with their escort over Calais-Marck and, with the *Jabos* in sections of three abreast, headed for their target. The *Jabos* and most of the fighters flew at zero feet, but to create a diversion, parts of the fighter escort crossed the coast at heights of up to 3,000 ft and the raid was supported by other fighters which provided top cover up to 10,000 feet. Radio silence was maintained throughout the operation and it was accompanied by heavy jamming of the British radio and radar frequencies.

In conditions of poor visibility and low cloud, the raid achieved complete surprise, arriving over the centre of Canterbury in the late afternoon during the most crowded shopping period. Some pilots, concerned to find that the balloon defences had been raised, released their bombs prematurely and although the *Jabos* were over the target for barely five minutes, their high-explosive bombs caused damage, casualties and fires in the centre of the city.

The Fw 190 flown by *Uffz.* Alfred Immervoll of 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 26 was damaged when it collided with a balloon cable and, although the aircraft lost three feet from one wing, Immervoll was able to return safely. The defending fighters and guns accounted for two aircraft from the fighter escort. One was flown by *Lt.* Paul Galland, youngest brother of Adolf Galland the – *General der Jagdflieger* – who was shot down into the Channel by a Spitfire as the raiders withdrew. The other machine was an Fw 190 A-2, 'Black 2', of 5./JG 2, which was engaged by light anti-aircraft fire. Hit in the right tailplane and with his engine set on fire, the pilot, *Fw.* Alfred Hell, baled out and was captured, his machine plunging into the ground.

The attack on Canterbury was purposely aimed at the civilian population in retaliation for what were seen as RAF terror raids on German towns and cities. All the CHL Stations in the area were jammed during the raid which, within its limits, was a well-planned and successful venture.

Terrorising British Civilians

After the Canterbury raid, the number of occasions in which attacks were carried out against purely civilian objectives continued to rise and there was a marked increase in the number of low-level fighter attacks by cannon and machine-gun fire. This was especially true in the period from mid-November to mid-December, when the fighter-bombers of 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 2 and 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 26, together with the fighters of 1./JG 2, were withdrawn from the Channel coast to support the German invasion of Vichy France and 11./JG 2 moved into the Mediterranean theatre to support German forces in North Africa. On direct orders from the *Führer*, the single-engined fighter units remaining in Northern France were to begin *Störangriffe*, or harassment raids, against purely civilian targets and, at briefings, pilots were given no specific objectives but were told quite frankly to attack anything and everything liable to terrorise the British public. Trains, buses, gatherings of people, herds of cattle and sheep, etc., were all specifically mentioned as likely targets and on a number of occasions farm buildings and even haystacks were deliberately attacked.

The first of these missions was flown on the afternoon of 27 November when two Fw 190s from 5./JG 26 attacked a minesweeper off Dover and then opened fire with machine guns at Ashford and Hythe. They then attacked a train near Lydd. The first aircraft scored hits on the engine but the second machine, flown by *Ofw.* Heinrich Bierwirth, struck the railway engine and crashed immediately afterwards.

During these near-daily attacks, neither Spitfire Vs and VIs nor the Mustangs had had any success, but the low-level performance of a Typhoon squadron which had moved to Manston to combat the raids greatly improved Fighter Command's ability to catch the hit-and-run Fw 190s. Also beginning to make its presence felt was the Spitfire IX, one early interception occurring at midday on 11 December when a patrol was directed to four Fw 190s six miles south of Hastings. The Fw 190s had machine-gunned a number of places in Kent and Sussex and were returning to France in line abreast at 200 feet in poor, rainy weather and with 7/10ths cloud at 1,000 feet. One Focke-Wulf attacked was reported to have crashed into the sea. In fact the pilot, *Uffz.* Bruno Kuhn of 5./JG 26, reached the French coast but his aircraft had been so badly damaged that he crashed and was killed while attempting an emergency landing.

Early in the afternoon of the 19th, four Fw 190s from 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 26 attacked Sandwich with bombs and machine-gun fire, causing considerable damage to property. Leading this formation was the unit's new *Staffelkapitän*, *Oblt.* Kurt Müller, who was flying his first mission since returning to the Channel Front after duty in Southern France. East of Dover, Müller's aircraft was hit by light anti-aircraft

fire from a ship and was then attacked by Whirlwinds and Typhoons, one of which shot down Müller's Fw 190 which crashed into the sea. The pilot did not survive.

During 1942, *Jabos* were responsible for approximately 40 per cent of all daylight attacks, and with the whole area of the South Coast between Devon and Kent open to low-level attack, they undermined the entire British defence system to an extent that required a response out of all proportion to the strength of the attackers. It was hoped that the new very low-looking radar stations which had been developed during the year would be able to defeat such attacks early in 1943.

In January 1943, the *Luftwaffe* responded to RAF Bomber Command raids on Berlin with a series of reprisal attacks by fighters and fighter-bombers. The heaviest of these raids occurred on the 20th when *Luftwaffe* planning called for up to 100 fighters and fighter-bombers from JG 2 and JG 26 to be committed to the operation in which the main target was London. British fighter defences were diverted by fighter demonstrations off the Kent and Sussex coasts and over the Isle of Wight. Meanwhile, 28 Fw 190 fighter-bombers from 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 2 and 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 26 escorted by *Stab* and I./JG 26 crossed the coast between Rye and Beachy Head soon after midday and flew towards London at zero height in time to catch the lunchtime crowds. They encountered only minor anti-aircraft fire along their route and found part of the balloon barrage had been grounded just before the raid so that calibration of radar gun-laying equipment could take place, while other balloons were flying at 500 feet to avoid causing confusing radar echoes. Eight key industrial sites and five key railway points were attacked with 50 and 500 kg bombs. Flying just 15 feet over the rooftops, some pilots saw their bombs burst through the walls of two or sometimes three houses before exploding. As the aircraft withdrew, they caused panic in the streets and the sirens only sounded the warning after the first bombs had fallen. Nevertheless, the only serious damage was caused when a warehouse in the Surrey Commercial Docks caught fire but a school was hit and 44 were killed, most of them children.

Two aircraft of this wave were hit by anti-aircraft fire. The pilot of one is reported to have lost a hand but managed to return and make a normal landing, while the Fw 190 flown by *Lt.* Hermann Hoch of 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 26, who had jettisoned his bomb due to a rough-running engine, was hit twice by heavy anti-aircraft fire. Hoch crash-landed in a ploughed field, in the course of which his aircraft hit some trees, the engine was wrenched from the airframe and the pilot and the aircraft ended up in a thicket. The remains were destroyed by a destructive charge which Hoch activated before he was taken prisoner.

Typhoons and Spitfires, scrambled in connection with the main raid, caught the last of the raiders as they withdrew, a Spitfire shooting down the Fw 190 flown by *Ofw.* Paul Kierstein of 2./JG 26 who was killed when his 'Black 7' crashed into the sea off Dungeness. Spitfires and Typhoons then intercepted the second and third waves which consisted of Fw 190 *Jabos* escorted by Fw 190 and Bf 109 fighters and met with considerable success. Another seven aircraft were shot down, five of which were Bf 109 G-4s of 6./JG 26.

Although this attack on London was not repeated and no raid comprising as many aircraft ever appeared over England again, the total number of low-level raids increased in March and April 1943 and there was a tendency to employ formations larger than the *Rotten* and *Schwärme* seen hitherto. On 9 March, for example, six Fw 190s dropped bombs at Worthing and Hove, and in the late afternoon of the 11th, more than 20 Fw 190s crossed the coast near Rye at zero feet and carried out a sharp attack in which high-explosive bombs were dropped in and around Hastings, causing considerable damage to property. In the early morning of the 12th, 12 Fw 190s flew up the Thames Estuary at zero feet and dropped bombs at Ilford, Barking and Dagenham, causing considerable damage and a number of casualties. At the same time, another 12 Fw 190s flew overland to south-east of Chelmsford and carried out machine-gun attacks.

In the morning of 24 March, after a period of bad weather which restricted further operations, bombs dropped by 17 Fw 190 *Jabos* fell on the erecting and motor maintenance shops at Ashford junction, one of the most important railway works in Southern England. Two engines were wrecked and three damaged. Damage was also done to an empty passenger train, 12 trucks, stores, offices and workshops, while points and crossings at the entrance to the locomotive yard were blown out. Production in Ashford was seriously affected and the raid was altogether one of the most effective in the series of fighter-bomber attacks. As usual, the raiders had crossed the Channel at zero feet. Low-looking radar gave 17 1/2 miles warning of the raids and enabled 16 fighters to take off and although the air-raid warning was sounded in time to save many lives, 50 people were killed and another 156 injured. One Fw 190 of 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 54 – since 17 February, the new designation of the former 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 26 – was hit by anti-aircraft fire after it had dropped its bombs and exploded in the air killing the pilot, *Oblt.* Paul Keller, the *Staffelkapitän*.



LEFT: Hptm. Heinz Schumann became Staffelkapitän of 10.(Jabo)/JG 2 in December 1942 when the unit was equipped with the Bf 109 F. This view of Schumann was taken in March 1943, after the Staffel had converted to the Fw 190, and shows the unit emblem, a red-brown fox with a grey ship in its mouth.

ABOVE: An Fw 190 A-5 coded 'Black 10' pictured at St. Omer-Wizernes as it taxis out for an attack on a target in the south of England in January 1943. The aircraft is loaded with a 500 kg bomb. When bombed-up, the aircraft took off from concrete runways.



RIGHT AND BELOW: With its mission accomplished and its bomb rack empty, an Fw 190 Jabo of 10.(Jabo)/JG 54 comes to a halt in front of its covered shelter at St. Omer-Wizernes in early 1943. The Staffel lost no fewer than 20 pilots in the two months between 17 February and 15 April, at which point it was again redesignated as 14./SKG 10 and subsequently saw action in the Mediterranean theatre. The 10.(Jabo)/JG 26 originally used white identification numbers on its Bf 109 Fs but changed them to black after converting to the Fw 190 in mid-1942.



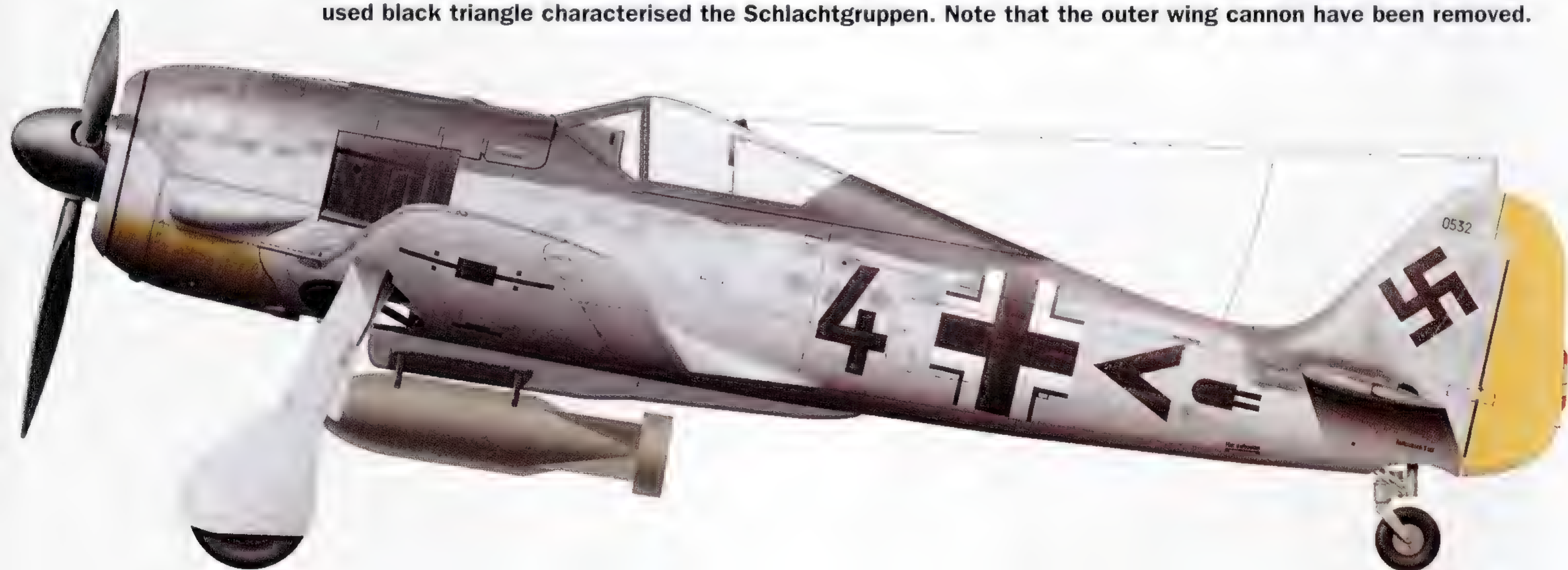


THIS PAGE: The Fw 190 was considered better suited than the Bf 109 F for fighter-bomber work because of its good speed and manoeuvrability at low altitudes and the fact that its air-cooled engine made it less sensitive to hits. Although the bomb racks were easily detachable for operations in the purely fighter role, they were not always removed in practice as their effect on performance was not very great. The 250 kg bomb, on the other hand, considerably affected manoeuvrability and reduced speed at ground level by some 30-35 mph. These photographs show 'Black 4' of 10.(Jabo)/JG 54, which officially came into existence on 17 February 1943 when 10.(Jabo)/JG 26 was redesignated.



Focke-Wulf Fw 190 A-5 'Black 4' of 10.(Jabo)/JG 54, France, early 1943

Finished in a high demarcation scheme of RLM 74 and 75 over RLM 76 undersurfaces with minimal fuselage mottling, this aircraft is typical of the Focke-Wulf fighter-bombers operated by this unit in early 1943. All aircraft of the Staffel seem to have had the chevron behind the Balkenkreuz which, together with the stylised black and white bomb, characterised the aircraft of this unit in much the same way as the more extensively used black triangle characterised the Schlachtgruppen. Note that the outer wing cannon have been removed.



Walter Oesau

Walter Oesau was born on 28 June 1913 at Farnewinkel in the Dithmarschen region of Schleswig-Holstein. He went into the *Reichsarbeitsdienst*, or RAD¹ in 1933 and then joined the Army, serving as a private in an artillery regiment. By 1934 he had become a *Fabnenjunker*² and began flying training with the *Deutsche Verkehrsfliegerschule*. He entered the *Luftwaffe* at about the time it was founded and, with his flying training completed, in 1937 he was posted to *Jagdgeschwader* 132 'Richthofen' as a *Leutnant*.

In April 1938, Lt. Oesau volunteered for service in the Spanish Civil War and was sent to join J/88 where he flew the He 51 biplane with 3. *Staffel*. He claimed his first victory on 15 July, his second on the 17th and his third victory a day later. By the end of July, Oesau had five victories and by the end of his service in Spain had a total of nine, his last being a *Rata* shot down on 3 November. He returned to Germany promoted to *Oberleutnant* and with the Spanish Wound Badge, but was later awarded the Spanish Cross in Gold with Swords and Diamonds, a decoration awarded to only 27 combatants who, in the opinion of the *Führer*, were especially deserving of it.

As from 1 March 1939, Walter Oesau served for a short time with the *Stabschwarm* of I./JG 2, but on 15 July was appointed *Staffelkapitän* of I./JG 20, later to become 7./JG 51. It is customary when referring to pilots' victory claims to discount any achieved in Spain, so Oesau's first victories must be considered to have occurred after the start of the Second World War when he shot down a Curtiss on 13 May, followed by two Spitfires on the 31st. By the end of the French campaign, Oesau had added two bombers to his score, bringing his total to five victories.

With the start of the Battle of Britain, 7./JG 51 took part in operations over the Channel and Southern England, and between 7 July and 18 August, Oesau had added a Defiant, ten Spitfires and four Hurricanes to his score, becoming the fifth *Luftwaffe* pilot to reach 20 victories. For this achievement he was awarded the *Ritterkreuz* on the 20 August. On 25 August, *Hauptmann* Oesau was appointed *Gruppenkommandeur* of III./JG 51 and on 11 November, by which time he had 39 victories, he became *Kommandeur* of III./JG 3. Oesau's 40th victory occurred on 5 February 1941 when he shot down a Spitfire flown by a sergeant pilot of 610 Sqn. who became a prisoner of war, and although he identified the aircraft destroyed as a Hurricane, it was another milestone in his career; he was awarded the Oak Leaves to his Knight's Cross and the German press began referring to him as "German Air Ace No. 3".

Hptm. Oesau claimed another Spitfire and another Hurricane in the West before his *Gruppe* was transferred eastwards for the launching of Operation 'Barbarossa', the attack on Russia, in June 1941. Almost immediately, Oesau began to make multiple claims, shooting down two aircraft in separate engagements on the 24th and three in two combats on the 26th. By the end of June, his score had increased to 51 and on 10 July he claimed five Soviet aircraft destroyed for his 64th to 68th victories. He recorded his 70th victory

on 11 July and on the 15th his tally had increased to 80, for which he became only the third recipient of the Swords.

With a total of 86 claims, Oesau was recalled to the Western Front and on 29 July he took command of JG 2, the 'Richthofen' *Geschwader*, following the death in action of the *Kommodore*, 23-victory ace and *Eichenlaubträger* Major Wilhelm Balthasar on the 7th. Major Oesau scored his first victory with JG 2 on 10 August, when he shot down a Spitfire,

FAR LEFT: One of the Bf 109 F aircraft flown by Oberst Walter Oesau when *Kommodore* of the 'Richthofen' *Geschwader*.



1. Reichs Labour Service
2. Officer Cadet

RIGHT: Major Walter Oesau, Geschwader Kommodore of JG 2 and Hptm. Siegfried Schnell, Staffelkapitän of 9./JG 2, two Eichenlaubträger of the 'Richthofen Geschwader'.



BELOW: This Fw 190 A-5 of Stab/JG 2 was photographed at Beaumont-le-Roger in February 1943 when parts of the Geschwader were converting to the Bf 109 G, some of which may be seen parked in the background. Some sources list this aircraft as an A-4, and although the wingtip obscures the area forward of the wing root, careful measurement of the distance between the windscreen and the cowling joint line certainly suggests this aircraft had the extended nose of the A-5 series. This particular Fw 190 A-5 is thought to have been one of the machines allocated to Obstlt. Walter Oesau, then the Kommodore of JG 2.



Focke-Wulf Fw 190 A-5 of Stab/JG 2, France, February 1943

A fairly typical 74/75/76 fighter finish was applied to this aircraft which also had the usual yellow identification areas. It is thought that the Stab markings were in black, outlined in white, although the markings nearest the front of the aircraft were faded and are believed to have appeared a lighter colour due to the exhaust staining. The same fading may be seen to the rear of the black-painted area outlined in white behind the exhausts outlets.



and followed up with a further five Spitfires on the 12th. By 26 October, Oesau had recorded his 100th victory, a Spitfire shot down that day, and thus became only the third *Luftwaffe* pilot to reach this landmark. In accordance with prevailing custom, he was then forbidden to fly further combat sorties in order that his valuable combat experience and qualities of leadership should be preserved. Oesau remained as *Kommodore* of JG 2, however, and on 17 April 1942, despite the official ban on his operational flying, shot down one of four Lancasters claimed by JG 2 as the bombers flew over the airfield at Beaumont-le-Roger while on their way to bomb the MAN diesel-engine works at Augsburg.

At this time, JG 2 was equipped with the Bf 109 F, but commencing in mid-March, the *Geschwader* began converting to the Fw 190, a process which should have been virtually completed by the end of May 1942. Although the Fw 190 possessed some outstanding qualities, its performance deteriorated above 20,000 feet and in mid-May, parts of I./JG 2 gave up their Fw 190s and began converting to the Bf 109 G which had a superior performance at that altitude. Parts of II. *Gruppe* followed suit, so that throughout the early Spring and Summer, the two *Gruppen* operated a mixture of Fw 190 As and Bf 109 G-6s. Later, this arrangement was found to be unsatisfactory and II. *Gruppe* re-equipped entirely with Bf 109 Gs while I. and III./JG 2 were equipped with the Fw 190.

Meanwhile, on 28 June 1943, *Oberstleutnant* Walter Oesau was celebrating his 30th birthday at Beaumont-le-Roger when 43 B-17s bombed the airfield. Twenty members of the *Geschwader* were killed while others were injured and buildings damaged. Oesau had already been notified that he was due to take up a staff position and, three days later, he handed over command of JG 2 to *Eichenlaubträger* Egon Mayer. For Oesau, a series of staff positions followed, including his appointment as *Jafü* 4 in Brittany, and he was holding this position when he was awarded the German Cross in Gold on 17 October.

By late 1943, the situation for Germany had dictated that the earlier order banning highly-decorated and experienced pilots from combat flying should be relaxed, and on 12 November 1943, *Oberst* Oesau was appointed *Kommodore* of JG 1, taking over from *Oberst* Hans Philipp, who had been killed. Oesau soon added at least 14 four-engined US Liberator and Flying Fortress bombers and two P-47 Thunderbolts to his list of victories, his last, a P-47, being his 127th, shot down south-west of Verden on 8 May 1944.

Three days later, US bombers raided north-eastern Belgium and Luxemburg. Nearly 900 bombers took part and the fighter escort flew over 1,000 sorties. At Paderborn, 30 Bf 109 Gs of *Stab* and III./JG 1 took off with Oesau leading the three aircraft of JG 1's *Stabsschwarm*. While still attempting to attack the bombers, Oesau was bounced by escorting P-38s and separated from his comrades. According to some sources, a ten-minute fight ensued in which Oesau battled alone against five P-38s which apparently damaged Oesau's aircraft, but thereafter accounts vary. One source maintains that the P-38 pilots made no claim as they had seen no strikes on Oesau's Bf 109, but after examination of their gun-camera film, they were credited with a probable. Another account states that Oesau was chased down to ground level where he was finally shot down. Whatever the truth, the P-38's gun-camera film apparently showed a Bf 109 G-6/AS coded 'Green 13' and with a red Reich Defence band around the rear fuselage, exactly in accordance with the markings carried by Oesau's machine.

Oesau was found near the remains of his wrecked aircraft. His body had several bullet wounds, suggesting that he was probably unconscious or already dead before his aircraft hit the ground. He was buried at Meldorf in Schleswig-Holstein.

Unfortunately, we know little of Oesau's character as a man, most historians preferring to judge him only by his victory score. However, a few clues exist. In a secret recording, a German PoW in RAF hands who had visited JG 2 was heard explaining to a fellow prisoner that, while Oesau might have been strict on matters of efficiency and etiquette and had perhaps taken full advantage of his luxurious HQ at Beaumont-le-Roger, he ensured also that his men enjoyed the same facilities without any distinctions between even senior officers and NCOs. And Adolf Galland characterised Oesau by describing him as "one of the greatest fighter pilots produced by Germany during the Second World War. He was tough-minded as well as a brilliant aerial fighter."

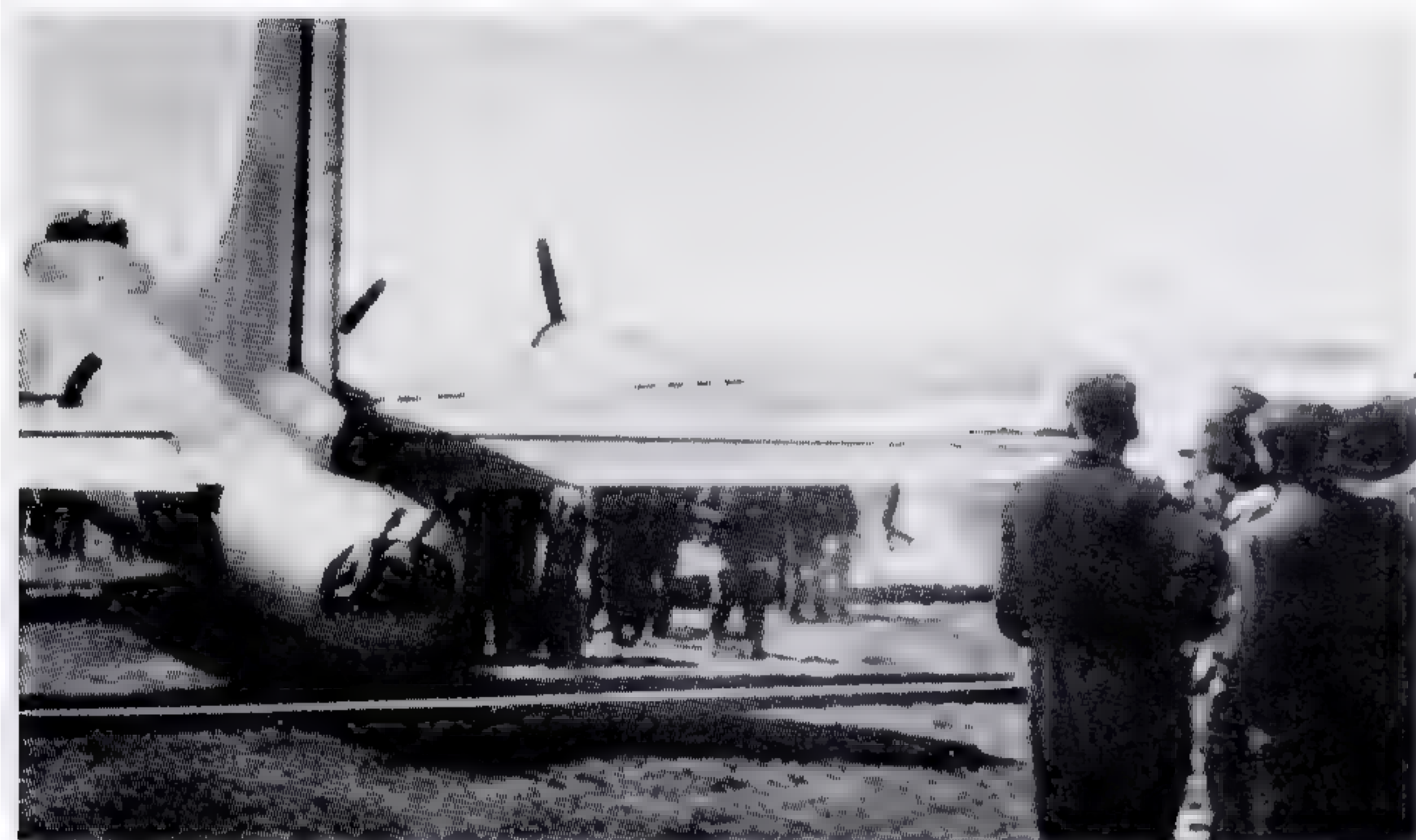
It seems, however, that Oesau's experiences had taken their toll, though few seemed to realise that by 1944 he was at the end of his tether. One who did was Hartmann Grasser, who served under him as a *Major* and *Kommandeur* of III./JG 1. Commenting on the loss of Oesau, he said: "At that time, Oesau was at the end of his physical and mental powers [yet] the German fighter pilots, like their officers, had to fight right through the war without rest. I consider that a grave error on the part of our High Command. I personally took part in the combat when Oesau was lost. Alone, chased by Lightnings and Mustangs, he had no chance of escaping."

Ironically, several hours after Oesau had been shot down, *Stab*/JG 1 received an order immediately transferring Oesau away from the battle-front to Galland's Headquarters Staff. Henceforth, as a tribute to its late *Kommodore*'s achievements and leadership, JG 1 received the honour-title *Jagdgeschwader 1 Oesau*.

Strengthening the Western Defences

On 6 December 1942, JG 26's *Kommodore*, Major Priller, shot down a Spitfire as his 80th victory and on the 20th there was a large raid by 72 B-17s which provided JG 26 with one of its most successful days at the end of the year. Mainly carrying out frontal attacks, JG 26 claimed five bombers, which included Priller's 81st victory, while pilots from JG 2 claimed another five, two of these being claimed by Major Walter Oesau. In fact, US losses were six heavy bombers shot down and 30 damaged.

Meanwhile, on 12 December a damaged B-17 had landed at Leeuwarden in Holland. Subsequently repaired, it was examined at the *Luftwaffe* test centre at Rechlin and was later sent on a tour of *Jagdwaaffe* units in France and Germany in order that German fighter pilots could acquaint themselves with the bomber's strengths and weaknesses. Knowledge of the crew positions and the location of the gun positions was especially vital, and the most vulnerable areas of the aircraft – the wing-mounted fuel tanks and the engine oil tanks – were outlined with white lines. From this close examination and a pooling of

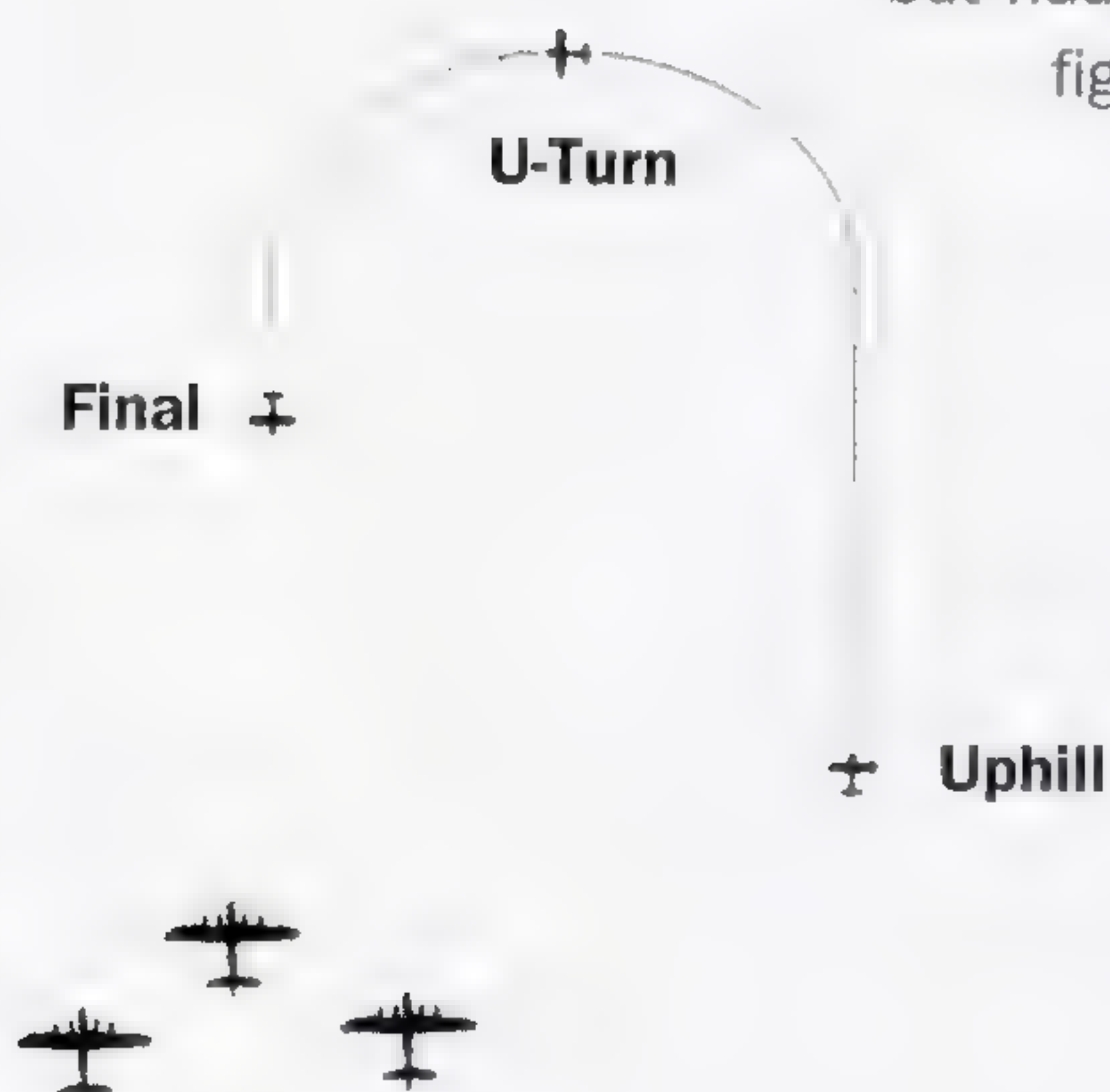


existing experience, there developed improved methods for attacking the heavily armed bombers and these were later published in a set of Tactical Regulations prescribing how attacks on heavy bombers should be carried out. The ideal was a frontal attack but, it was recognised that this would not always be possible. If attacks from behind had to be carried out, it was recommended that they were to be made from slightly above and below in order that the fuel tanks and engines would provide better aiming points. The Regulations also recommended that attacks were to be concentrated in *Schwärme*, with waves of *Schwärme* following in rapid succession. After their attacks, the fighter pilots were instructed to pass over the bombers and maintain visual contact so that a concentrated repeat attack could be made.

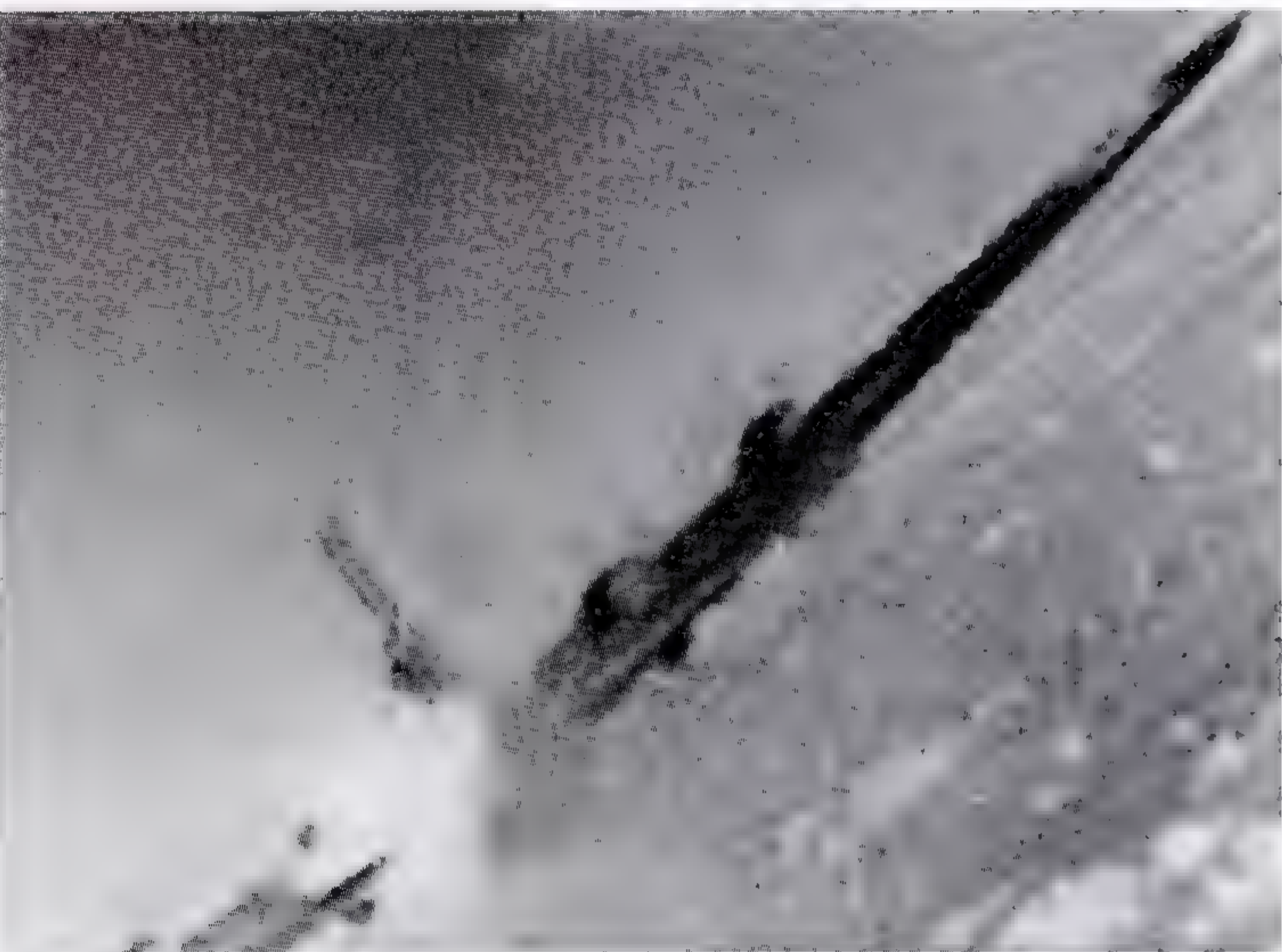
The preferred method of attack, however, was the frontal attack as pioneered by Egon Mayer of JG 2, although because of the high closing speed of the aircraft, pilots were naturally apprehensive about such tactics and concerned about collisions. Moreover, due to the short aiming time available to them, pilots frequently misjudged the range at which to open fire. Some fighter commanders therefore slightly modified the Tactical Regulations and ordered attacks from a shallow, 10-degree dive. This was found to improve matters to such an extent that even less experienced pilots scored victories. Thus was born the '12 o'clock high' form of attack most feared by bomber crews.

At the beginning of 1943, the *Luftwaffe*'s fighter force in the West was substantial and efficient but had changed little in strength since August 1942. On 10 January, the single-engined fighter strength in *Luftflotte* 3 amounted to 294 Fw 190s, of which 180 were serviceable. They were drawn from *Stab*, I, III. and 10.(*Jabo*)/JG 2, *Stab*, I, II

ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT: This captured B-17 was repainted in German markings and toured German fighter stations in order that pilots could inspect it at close quarters. Particularly vulnerable areas on the wings and engine cowlings were highlighted with white outlines.



LEFT: In the head-on method of attacking bombers, the German fighters would fly a course parallel to the bombers until they reached a point some 2 - 3 miles ahead of the formation. The fighters then turned in by *Schwarm* while maintaining the same altitude as the bombers and attacked head-on, opening fire at a range of some 900 yards before rising to make their escape by flying flat across the top of the formation. After completing the attack, they were then to turn after the bombers and deal with any that had been knocked out of the formation. Because the rearward defensive fire from the American bombers was considerably stronger than from the front, head-on attacks were recommended but if this was not practicable, high-speed attacks were to be carried out in rapid succession from astern by concentrated groups of fighters approaching from slightly above or below. However, in both methods of attack, pilots would too often break away prematurely, exposing their undersides and presenting the American gunners with a larger and relatively easier target.



and III./JG 26 and 10.(Jabo)/JG 54. In addition, there were 185 single-engined fighters in *Luftflotte Reich* of which 137 were serviceable. They were all contained in JG 1 and with the exception of 43 Bf 109 G-1s, which had an improved performance over other types of Bf 109, particularly at high altitude, consisted of Fw 190s.

On 27 January 1943, the Americans opened their daylight bombing offensive against targets in Germany itself when a mixed force of Eighth Air Force B-17s and B-24s attacked Wilhelmshaven. Opposing the raid was *Hptm.* Günther Beise's I. /JG 1, equipped with Bf 109 G-1s. The *Gruppe* lost five of its own aircraft and three pilots, and although it claimed five bombers, it shot down only one, an experience which seemed to confirm the semi-official opinion that, against the four-engined bombers, the Fw 190 was the more effective aircraft.

After the raid, Hitler summoned *General der Jagdflieger* Galland to a meeting and enquired what he thought could be done to stop them. Galland was confident that with a major expansion of the fighter force his pilots could inflict losses on the bombers of some 80 per cent and force the enemy to abandon such attacks. According to Galland's reckoning, in order to be effective, three or four German fighters would be required for each bomber, five, if the bombers were escorted. Immediately, efforts began to strengthen Germany's daylight aerial defences by denuding other theatres in order that units could be transferred to the Channel Front. By April 1943, some 25 per cent of the *Luftwaffe's* total fighter strength was located in Germany or on the Western Front.

The first *Gruppe* to arrive was I./JG 27, newly equipped with the Bf 109 G-4, which came to France at the end of January under the command of *Hptm.* Heinrich Setz. This was followed in mid-February by *Major* Reinhard Seiler's Bf 109 G-equipped III./JG 54, which moved into Vendeville in France to replace I./JG 26 which had been transferred temporarily to the Russian Front. Also moving to the West at the same time was 4./JG 54 under *Oblt.* Siegfried Graf von Matuschka, which was

subordinated to *Major* Josef Priller's III./JG 26 to replace 7./JG 26, another unit which had been temporarily detached to Russia. Also transferred to the defence of the West was I./JG 3 under *Major* Klaus Quaet-Faslem. Previously on the Eastern Front, this unit had suffered serious losses at Stalingrad and, after being withdrawn in May, had re-equipped with the new Bf 109 G-6/R6 'Kanonenboote' ⁶.

On 26 February 1943, 65 American bombers again attacked Wilhelmshaven. Seven B-17s were lost in this attack, all claimed by the defending pilots of JG 1 who also damaged a further 43. Such isolated successes, however, were insufficient to stop the daylight attacks, an unhappy truth which caused the relationship between Göring and Adolf Galland to worsen. Together with Hitler's Armament Minister, Albert Speer, Galland tried to warn Göring that escorted daylight raids over the industrial Ruhr were soon

LEFT: Various views of B-17s under attack. In the first photograph an Fw 190 is making a beam attack on the Fortress, probably a straggler which has already been set on fire and separated from its formation. The other two photographs are gun camera stills of another B-17 under attack and give a good impression of the view an attacking German pilot might see as he opened fire on his target.

6. 'Gunboats', a *Luftwaffe* term for Bf 109s equipped with a pair of MG 151/20 cannon in underwing fairings.

to be reckoned with, but Göring dismissed the idea and both he and the *Luftwaffe* High Command resolutely refused to consider the possibility of waging a defensive war. When the raids did materialise as predicted, Göring made insulting remarks about the *Jagdflieger* which, he asserted, were all cowardly, and at a meeting at Schleissheim in early 1943 he made a statement about the "Battle of Britain heroes who had lied for each others' *Ritterkreuze*", whereupon Galland apparently removed his own *Ritterkreuz* and slammed it down on the table. According to Galland, other *Ritterkreuzträger* in the *Jagdflieger* offered to remove theirs too but were forbidden by him to do so and, although Göring later apologised, a full year passed before Galland would again wear his decoration.

The pilots of III./JG 54 soon discovered that conditions in the West were markedly different from those in Russia. Placed under the command of JG 26's *Major* Priller, it became clear that they would have to undergo a period of training before being committed to battle but, after a month, Priller still refused to declare the *Gruppe* operational and on 27 March it transferred to Oldenburg to join JG 1 where, beyond the range of escort fighters, it could more easily adapt to combating the American bombers. Even so, the unit's inexperience resulted in an increasing list of casualties, and on 15 May, *Hptm.* Günther Fink, the *Staffelkapitän* of 8./JG 54, and *Lt.* Friedrich Rupp from 7./JG 54, were lost while intercepting a force of B-17s over Heligoland. Both pilots were experienced *Ritterkreuzträger*, each with about 50 Eastern Front victories.

Similarly, I./JG 27 also had difficulties in adjusting to the different conditions in the West, although *Lt.* Karl von Lieres und Wilkau, the *Staffelkapitän* of 3./JG 27, achieved the *Gruppe*'s first victory on 8 March when he destroyed a B-17 near St. Lô, followed the next day by a Mosquito shot down north of Bayeux as his 28th victory. However, on the afternoon of 13 March, the *Gruppe* lost two aircraft and their pilots, one being the *Kommandeur*, *Hptm.* Heinrich Setz. Setz, an *Eichenlaubträger*, had taken off to intercept a formation of B-17s bound for the Amiens marshalling yards, but became involved in a battle with the Spitfire escort. Although he shot down three of the Spitfires, bringing his total to 138 victories, Setz was himself shot down and killed by a Spitfire over the Somme Estuary. He was temporarily replaced by *Hptm.* Hans-Joachim Heinecke who led the *Gruppe* until *Hptm.* Erich Hohagen, a *Ritterkreuzträger* formerly with JG 2, took command on 7 April.

Apart from transferring units from other theatres, the defences in the West were further increased by adopting the pre-war procedure of dividing an existing unit into cadres to form other units and on 1 April, I. and III./JG 1 were split from the remainder of the *Geschwader* to form the II. and I. *Gruppe* respectively of an entirely new *Jagdgeschwader*, designated JG 11. While JG 1 moved into Holland, JG 11 assumed responsibility for the daylight aerial protection of the German Bight. The two new *Gruppen* of JG 11 were themselves later divided in mid-May to form III./JG 11.

Earlier, on 16 February, B-17 crews over St. Nazaire had seen two Fw 190s dive on a pair of bombers and release what appeared to be clusters of small bombs some 100 ft above them which caused a series of small explosions behind the bombers. The German unit involved is not known, but the incident is believed to have been an early experiment in air-to-air bombing. In early March, *Lt.* Dieter Gerhard of 2./JG 1 began similar experiments but was mortally wounded during an attack on B-24s on

the 18th. Gerhard's friend, *Lt.* Heinz Knoke, continued with the idea and on the 22nd, carrying a 250 kg bomb beneath his Bf 109 G, Knoke intercepted a B-17 formation returning from an attack on Wilhelmshaven. Climbing above the bombers, he released his bomb which exploded among a vic of three B-17s, blowing the wing off one of them. It was his fifth victory and, later that night, *Reichsmarschall* Göring telephoned Knoke to congratulate him on his innovative achievement. On 1 April, 2./JG 1 was redesignated 5./JG 11 and by 28 July, had destroyed seven B-17s by this method, three of them by a single bomb released by *Uffz.* Wilhelm 'Jonny' Fest. This *Staffel* was the *Gruppe*'s most successful unit in combating the 'Viermots', being credited with almost as many victories as 4. and 6./JG 11 combined.

BELOW: *Hptm.* Erich Hohagen, previously the *Staffelkapitän* of 7./JG 2, took command of I./JG 27 on 7 April 1943 and led the *Gruppe* until wounded in an air battle on 1 June. When released from hospital in mid-July, he took command of II./JG 2. Of his 55 victories, 13 were four-engined bombers.



BELOW: Continuing with trials already begun at Rechlin and also carried out by *Lt.* Dieter Gerhard of 2./JG 1, *Lt.* Heinz Knoke began similar experiments in March 1943. On 1 April 1943, I./JG 1 was redesignated II./JG 11 and Knoke's *Staffel* became 5./JG 11. In this photograph, taken at Jever soon afterwards, armourers are preparing to load an SC 250 bomb on the centreline ETC of Knoke's Bf 109 G-1 'Black 1'. At this time, Knoke was the *Staffelkapitän* of 5./JG 11.



Fighter Escort for the US Bombers

On 8 April, American P-47 Thunderbolts made their first sweep over France when 23 of these fighters carried out a 'Rodeo' between Dunkirk and Sangatte. This, however, was uneventful and the *Jagdwaaffe* refused to be drawn, believing that if it saved its strength for the daylight heavy bomber raids it could still inflict losses which would make them too costly.

On 17 April, the *Jagdwaaffe* put up its best defence to date during an attack by 107 B-17s on the Focke-Wulf aircraft factory at Bremen. This raid was met by the most vicious and concentrated series of fighter attacks yet encountered, no fewer than 16 bombers being shot down and a further 39 damaged. Among the pilots claiming victories was *Hptm.* Adolf Dickfeld, on this date appointed *Kommandeur* of II./JG 1, who shot down a bomber as his 134th *Abschuss*. Another B-17 was destroyed by *Lt.* Heinz Knoke, *Staffelkapitän* of 5./JG 11, as his sixth victory. Later that day, RAF 'Ramrods' in the areas of Abbeville, Caen and Zeebrugge resulted in the 39th victory for the *Kommandeur* of II./JG 26, *Hptm.* Wilhelm-Ferdinand Galland, who shot down a Mustang. *Oblt.* Josef Schlang of *Stab*, I./JG 27 shot down a Spitfire but was himself wounded and the *Staffelkapitän* of 3./JG 27, *Lt.* Karl von Lieres u. Wilkau, claimed a Spitfire as his 30th victory. Less encouraging was the loss on the 16th of the *Kommandeur* of II./JG 1, *Major* Herbert Kijewski and, one month later, his replacement, *Hptm.* Dietrich Wickop, was killed by P-47s.

The first use of the P-47 as an escort fighter for the B-17s occurred on 4 May during a mission to Antwerp in which the presence of the US fighters, even though their range extended only to the coastal area of Belgium, proved so effective that no bombers were lost. By this time, the German fighter force in the West had been expanded to a total of 1,328 aircraft in May, compared to 1,090 aircraft in January, and Adolf Galland believed that the best way to stop the American raids was to concentrate this force immediately on the fighters before the American pilots gained confidence and experience. Naturally, the *Reichsmarschall* and the *Führungsstab* perceived the bombers as the main threat and despite the *General der Jagdflieger's* Tactical Regulations, operational orders from the *Führungsstab*, *Jagdkorps* and *Jagddivisionen* cut across his plans and enforced strict attention to the anti-bomber mission. Caught in the middle of these high policy quarrels, many fighter units developed their own concepts.

One hundred and twenty-six B-17s were sent to Kiel on 14 May and although German fighters shot down eight of the bombers, III./JG 54 lost five Bf 109s and two pilots. Another of the four attacks carried out that day was against the airfield at Wevelgem, base of III./JG 26, where a number of air and ground personnel were killed, aircraft were destroyed and damaged, and the landing ground rendered unserviceable. *Hauptmann* Johannes Naumann, *Staffelkapitän* of 6./JG 26, shot down a B-17 as his 16th victory, but the Fw 190 flown by *Hptm.* Karl Borris, *Staffelkapitän* of 8./JG 26 was hit by return fire from one of the bombers. When Borris baled out, his parachute only partially opened and while he survived the fall, he broke several bones and subsequently spent some time in hospital. Another formation of 38 bombers sent to attack Antwerp was escorted by 118 P-47s from three US fighter groups, yet it was this raid which attracted the most attention, being intercepted by two *Gruppen* from JG 1 assisted by II./JG 26. After the Wevelgem and Antwerp attacks, several *Staffelkapitäne* submitted claims, *Oblt.* Horst Sternberg of 5./JG 26 being credited with a B-17 while *Oblt.* Paul Schlauder of 9. *Staffel* claimed a Spitfire and *Oblt.* Rudolf Leuschel of 10./JG 26 claimed one of the three P-47s lost during the day.

Kiel was attacked again on 19 May when 158 B-17s were sent to bomb this city and also Flensburg. These bombers were intercepted by fighters from *Jagdstaffel* Heligoland, JG 11 and JG 54 while another 24 B-17s carried out a diversionary mission. In the attacks on Kiel and Flensburg, six bombers were shot down and a further 37 damaged. Included in the claims were B-17s claimed by *Major* Anton Mader, *Kommodore* of JG 11, which brought his total tally to 66, *Oblt.* Rudolf Patzak, *Staffelkapitän* of 8./JG 54, and *Lt.* Knoke of 5./JG 11 who claimed his ninth victory. Two days later, the B-17s attacked Emden and the U-boat yards at Wilhelmshaven. Claims against the bombers were made by JG 1, *Jagdstaffel* Heligoland, JG 11, *EKdo.* 25, JG 27 and JG 54, and of the 12 bombers lost, five pilots from 2./JG 27 – operating under JG 1 – each claimed one apiece while JG 11's *Major* Mader claimed another. By this time, the fighters were aware that the American formations released their bombs when the lead aircraft did so, and on this occasion the persistent frontal attacks made on the leading aircraft of the Emden force

BELOW: When the P-47 Thunderbolt first appeared as an escort for the US heavy bombers, Galland wanted them attacked and destroyed before the American pilots gained experience, but he was overruled by higher authority who perceived the bombers as the greater threat. The German fighter pilots withheld their attacks on the bombers until fuel limitations caused the P-47s to turn back. These P-47s are from the 63rd Fighter Squadron, part of the 56th Fighter Group.



During the raids carried out on 21 May, the Wilhelmshaven force reported the first definite use of German fighters launching air-to-air mortars to further disrupt and separate the formations. Launched from well beyond the range of the bombers' guns, the mortar had a delayed fuse which detonated once the projectile had travelled 800 metres after firing and were designed to break up the tight bomber formations. The mortar attacks on the 21st are thought to have been carried out by *Erprobungskommando* 25, but another early user of these 'Stovepipes' was I./JG 1, which received them in June 1943, followed by JG 11 and two *Staffeln* of III./JG 26. At first, these mortars were quite successful, for although they adversely affected the performance of the fighters, attacks were intended to be carried out after the range of the US fighter escorts had compelled them to turn back. In practice, however, they were simply too heavy and after just six weeks use, JG 1 had already removed them from its aircraft. A better solution was to fit the mortars to twin-engined Bf 110s and Me 410s which were able to carry four tubes per aircraft and from August 1943, twin-engined *Zerstörer* units were transferred from other areas to North-West Germany where they were fitted with the mortar tubes. Held back until the US bombers were well beyond range of their fighter escort, these aircraft at first proved particularly effective when backed up by single-engined fighters which attacked bombers forced out of formation by the action of the *Zerstörer* units. They remained so for as long as the bombers were not accompanied by escort fighters.



Stab JG 2	Holland	Bf 109	13 (10)
I./JG 2	Holland	Bf 109	58 (48)
II./JG 2	Holland	Bf 109	74 (59)
III./JG 2	Holland	Fw 190	63 (55)
Stab JG 26	Pas de Calais	Fw 190	7 (4)
II./JG 26	Pas de Calais	Fw 190	55 (49)
8./JG 26	Pas de Calais	Bf 109 G and Fw 190	14 (12)
10.(Jabo)/JG 54)	Pas de Calais	Fw 190	26 (26)
12/JG 54)	Pas de Calais	Bf 109 G	14 (14)
I./JG 27 (less 2. Staffel)			
	NW France and Holland	Bf 109 G	17 (15)
			<u>341 (292)</u>
Stab SKG 10		Fw 190	4 (3)
I./SKG 10	SE Andre de L'Eure	Fw 190	36 (20)
II./SKG 10 *	Rennes/St. Jacques	Fw 190	36 (27)
			<u>76 (50)</u>

*Almost immediately after this date the *Gruppe* moved to the Mediterranean and was operational there on 14 June 1943.

As a measure of the *Führungsstab*’s concern over the daylight raids, by June 1943, even the German night-fighter units were ordered against American bombers in daylight operations. Thus, during a further attack on Wilhelmshaven on 11 June, intercepting fighters from JG 1, JG 11, JG 26 and JG 54 were joined by aircraft NJG 1, and of the eight bombers shot down that day, one was claimed by Uffz. Karl Pfeiffer of 10./NJG 1. However, in hoping to make use of the endurance of the night-fighter aircraft, the navigational skill of their crews and the ability of their machines to carry heavy armament, including rocket projectiles, the *Führungsstab* ordered the employment of night-fighters under circumstances to which they were not accustomed. Unused to flying in formation, they were unable to launch concentrated attacks and losses due to the bombers’ return fire were high. An unduly heavier toll was caused by Allied fighters and the loss of highly-trained crews had a considerable effect in weakening the night-fighter effort against the RAF’s night raids. Later, the night-fighters were ordered to attack only single bombers which had been forced from their formation, but the *Nachtjäger* were much against this employment and held their best crews back for night sorties only. Eventually, high losses forced a termination of such operations.

It was by now realised that separating a bomber from its formation, so that it lagged behind and was deprived of the rest of the formation’s defensive firepower, was of some importance since such stragglers, which might also have suffered damage, were less difficult to destroy. This fact, together with the award of decorations to fighter-pilots on the Eastern Front, where it was believed victories could be scored more easily, led to a new scoring system allowing pilots who succeeded in separating a bomber from its formation to be credited with a *Herausschuss*, literally a “shoot-out” but more correctly a separation. A *Herausschuss* did not count as a full victory and could not therefore be added to a pilot’s victory tally, but it was considered of sufficient significance to warrant the award of a number of points towards the totals required for the award of decorations. The term *endgültige Vernichtung*, or final destruction, referred to occasions when a pilot shot down a bomber which had already been separated from its formation. The number of points allocated for each accomplishment and the numbers required for the respective awards are shown in the following tables:

Luftwaffe Points Scoring System			
Aircraft Type:	Abschuss	Herausschuss	Endgültige Vernichtung
	(Aircraft Destroyed)	(Separation)	(Final Destruction)
Single-engined Fighter	1	0	0
Twin-engined Bomber	2	1	1/2
Four-engined Bomber	3	2	1
Points required for Luftwaffe Awards			
Iron Cross Second Class	1		
Iron Cross First Class	3		
Honour Cup	10		
German Cross in Gold	20		
Knight’s Cross	40		

Just how difficult it was for pilots in the West to qualify for Germany’s highest military awards can be judged from the fact that in 1943 only ten German Crosses in Gold were awarded to pilots of JG 2 and 8 to pilots of JG 26. The number of pilots in the West awarded decorations higher than the German Cross that year was even fewer and, in JG 2, the only *Ritterkreuz* went to *Hptm.* Bruno Stolle on 7 March when he reached 29 victories, while *Hptm.* Egon Mayer, the “Fortress specialist”, was awarded the *Eichenlaub* on 16 April for his 63 victories and “exemplary courage and an invincible will to win”. Similarly, the only pilots in JG 26 to receive the *Ritterkreuz* were *Hptm.* Wilhelm-Ferdinand Galland on 18 May after his 41st victory and, on 28 August with 38 victories, *Ofw.* Adolf Glunz. Glunz, incidentally, was the only NCO pilot in JG 26 ever to receive the Knight’s Cross.

‘Blitz Week’

By the middle of July 1943, the Eighth Air Force had flown 40 operational missions since 27 January, of which 27 were against U-boat bases and supply depots and the remainder against industrial targets and airfields. For the most part, these attacks had been on a modest scale and against targets in the German-occupied countries, and only towards the end of this period did it become commonplace for more than 100 heavy bombers to take part. Nevertheless, it had already become clear to the *Luftwaffe*

RIGHT: During the Eighth Air Force mission to Kassel and Oschersleben on 28 July 1943, the American bombers were attacked by Bf 109s and Fw 190s fitted with 21 cm mortars. In this series of stills, an Fw 190 with mortar tubes clearly visible beneath its wings closes in for an attack with its main armament. **LOWER RIGHT:**

One of the bombers damaged by fragments of mortar casing during the 28 July mission was 'The Sack', a B-17 of the 379th Bomb Group. Struck below the top turret, large fragments exploded the aircraft's oxygen bottles which blasted a large hole in the forward fuselage. Parts of the mortar round were later removed and examined by USAAF Technical Intelligence personnel who obtained valuable information on the air-to-air mortar.

that, although the aerial battle had by no means been decided in favour of the Allies, the Americans were continually expanding their strategic bomber arm and improving their tactics and equipment, and that soon, much heavier attacks on Germany itself could be expected.

On 4 July, 237 bombers were despatched to attack separate targets at Le Mans, Nantes and the lock gates at La Palaise. JG 26 had no success but pilots from JG 2 and *Jagdgruppe Ost* succeeded in destroying eight B-17s and damaging another 54, JG 2's *Lt. Wurmheller* and *Major Egon Mayer*, the latter now *Kommodore*, each claiming two B-17s shot down. A greatly exaggerated total of 21 claims was awarded to JG 2, however, and although losses included 20 German fighters destroyed or damaged, only one JG 2 pilot was killed.

On 24 July, the Eighth Air Force launched what came to be known as 'Blitz Week', a week of sustained attacks over a wide area designed to stretch and weaken the German fighter defences. Sixteen major industrial targets were attacked, the first being in Norway, but on this occasion *Luftwaffe* opposition was negligible. During raids on the 25th against Hamburg and Kiel, pilots of III./JG 26, together with aircraft from JG 1 and JG 11 – now equipped with 21 cm rocket mortars – shot down 19 B-17s and damaged another 117 but suffered a heavy loss when the Bf 109 G-6 flown by the *Kommandeur* of III./JG 1, *Major Karl-Heinz Leesman*, was hit while attacking a group of bombers and, trailing smoke, dived into the North Sea. Leesman, a *Ritterkreuzträger* who had previously been very successful on the Eastern Front and had 37 victories, five of them *Viermots*, was killed. The following day, III./JG 26 intercepted unescorted B-17s heading for Hannover and claimed three, but the greatest success of the day was again achieved by JG 1 and JG 11 which, operating together, claimed 28 B-17s destroyed, one of these being shot down by *Hptm. Robert Olejnik*, the new *Kommandeur* of III./JG 1.

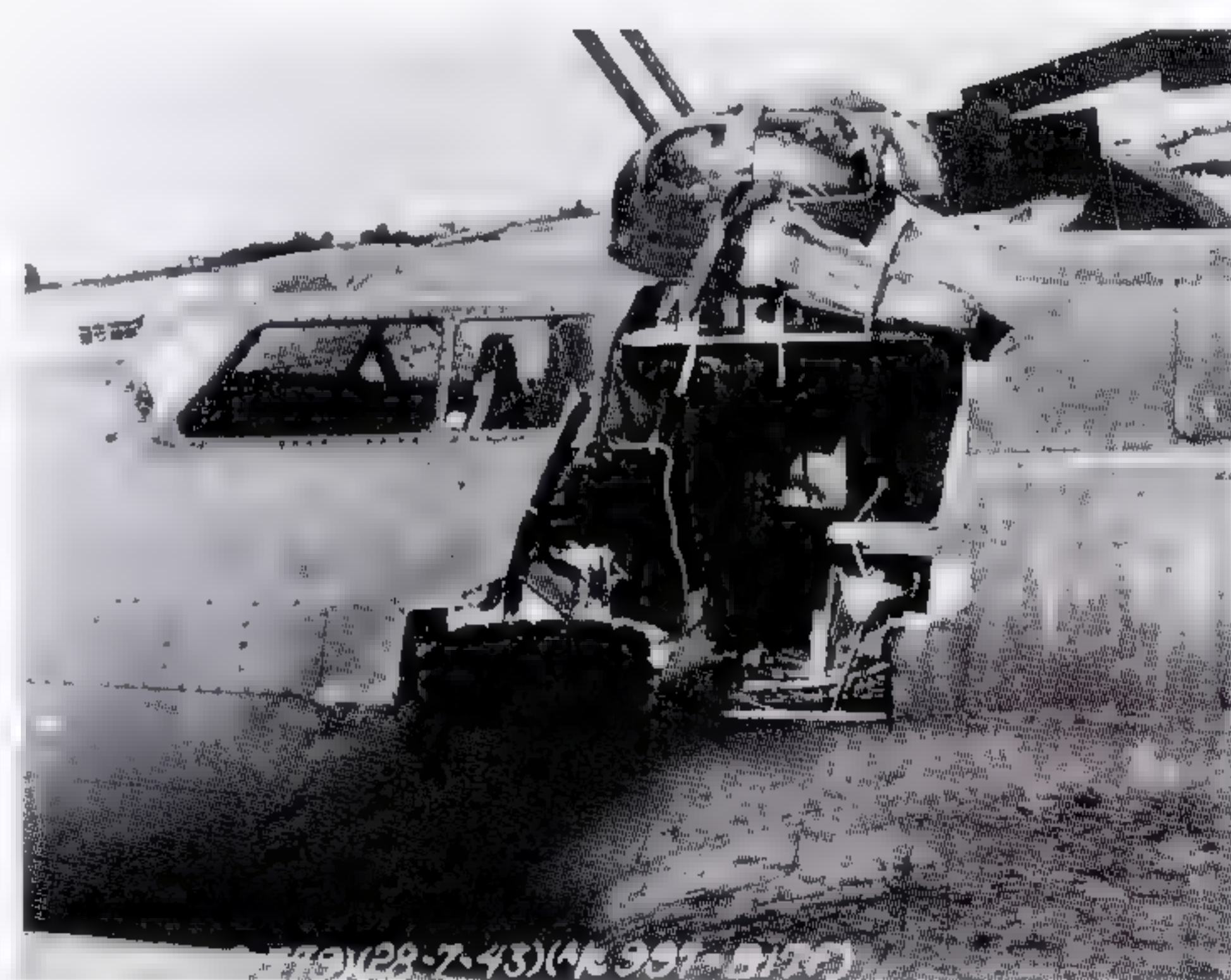
Poor weather on the 27th prevented a B-17 mission, but on 28 July, JG 1, JG 11 and JG 26, went into action against B-17s which had set out to attack Kassel and Oschersleben. Although more than 200 B-17s took off, poor weather compelled over half the aircraft to abort and reduced the attacking force to 95 bombers. The first German fighter unit to attack was III./JG 26 which intercepted the bombers while they were still on their way to the target and, in a single attack carried out at the limit of their range, claimed three B-17s destroyed. JG 1 and JG 11 then carried out determined attacks in which, as well as employing their cannon and machine guns predominantly in diving attacks from the front or closing level from the rear, they also carried out their first effective 21 cm mortar attack. As the bombers withdrew, they were met at the Dutch frontier by a P-47 Fighter Group equipped for the first time with long-range drop tanks which enabled them to penetrate as far as Germany's western frontier. The arrival of the P-47s broke up an attack in progress by the Fw 190 A-5s of *Hptm. Karl Borris's* I./JG 26, which had already shot down one B-17. Had it not been for the arrival of the P-47s, casualties among the bombers might have been higher, but a total of 22 bombers was shot down and 118 damaged in the day's action, 11 being claimed by pilots of JG 11 which included two claimed by *Obt. Sommer* of 4./JG 11. In JG 1, *Uffz. Fest* of 5. *Staffel* claimed three B-17s, and *Obt. Harry Koch*, the *Staffelkapitän* of 6./JG 1, claimed another two.

On the 29th, 193 heavy bombers set out for Kiel and Warnemünde, during which they lost ten B-17s destroyed or written off and 69 damaged. The final raid of 'Blitz Week' took place on the 30th when 186 B-17s took off for Kassel. Operational planning called for a Spitfire escort to provide short-range cover, after which the bombers were to proceed alone, relying on their close formation and defensive fire-power until met over Holland during their return flight home. The first German fighters to attack were from

40(586)

41(586)

42(586)



II./JG 1 and 8./JG 26 which shot down three B-17s during their outward flight, but in order to achieve the greatest concentration and co-ordination of their fighters, the German controllers held most of their units on the ground to await the bombers' return flight. However, not all units made contact and although interceptions were carried out by parts of JG 1, JG 2, JG 3, JG 11 and JG 26, resulting in the loss of 12 B-17s and another 82 damaged, the full weight of German fighter attacks had still to develop when the arrival of the P-47s brought the battle to an end. The resulting clash over Holland was the heaviest combat yet between German and American fighters and although seven P-47s were lost, German losses included the *Staffelkapitäne* of 2. and 3./JG 1, both killed. As a result of this encounter with the P-47s, I./JG 1 removed the mortar tubes from its aircraft.

Following 'Blitz Week', the Eighth Air Force did not return to the offensive until 12 August when B-17s attacked Bonn and targets in the Ruhr. *Luftwaffe* units involved in this attack were *Stab*, I., II. and III./JG 1, II./JG 2, I. and III./JG 3, I. and III./JG 26, I./JG 27, III./JG 54 and *Jagdgruppe Süd*; a total of 11 *Jagdgruppen*. Learning from the events of 30 July, the *Luftwaffe* concentrated its fighters inland, beyond the range of the P-47s, and accomplished its most successful interception to date, causing the loss of 25 bombers and damaging a further 172.

This success confirmed the fact that only concentrated attacks by co-ordinated forces offered any prospect of success. Three additional Bf 109 G *Jagdgruppen*, II./JG 3, III./JG 3 and II./JG 27, had already been transferred from the Russian and Mediterranean Fronts to reinforce the *Jagdgeschwader* defending the West and, during July and August, a total of 13 *Jagd-* and *Zerstörergruppen* were added to home defence, either by forming new units or transferring from other fronts. Thus the *Luftwaffe* finally realised that daylight bombing was an immediate and major threat to German war industry and began to take radical counter-measures, but as a new, in-depth defence against the US air offensive was constructed, the Eastern and Mediterranean fronts felt the strategic effect of daylight bombing as more fighters were transferred from these fronts to defend the West. In August, 60 per cent of the total German fighter force was operating in the West, leaving 18 per cent in Russia – previously the theatre to which the *Luftwaffe* Operations Staff had committed maximum support – and just 12 per cent in the Mediterranean.

This reinforcement of Germany's western air defences now coincided with a US Eighth Air Force operation designed to prove that unescorted heavy bombers, relying upon formation flying and co-ordinated fire-power as a defence, could not only force their way deep into enemy territory but, since the raids were to be conducted in broad daylight, accurately bomb strategic targets which were vital to the enemy's war effort. These heavy bomber raids were to be supported by medium bombers which simultaneously attacked airfields and other targets in occupied territory to divert German fighter reaction from the main operation. On 17 August, its entire 16-group strength of 375 B-17 bombers would be sent to attack two important industrial targets deep inside Germany – the aircraft factories at Regensburg and the ball-bearing plant at Schweinfurt.



ABOVE: During the first three years of the war, the construction of airfields within Germany had been much neglected and by 1943 the lack of suitable landing grounds was creating problems for the *Jagdgeschwader* engaged in defending their homeland.

Gruppen taking off under the control of one *Jagddivision* were passed over to another with little difficulty, but when they landed after a mission, they often found themselves on airfields lacking adequate facilities. To resolve this problem, a system of airfields was organised where the fighters could land, refuel and re-arm. Once a number of fighters arrived at such an airfield, the most senior pilot present would take charge and lead them against any bomber formations within range. The formation would locate the enemy from information received from the *Reichsjägerwelle* – a radio station broadcasting information about enemy activity over Germany – and were often successful provided the bombers were in loose formation and weakly escorted.

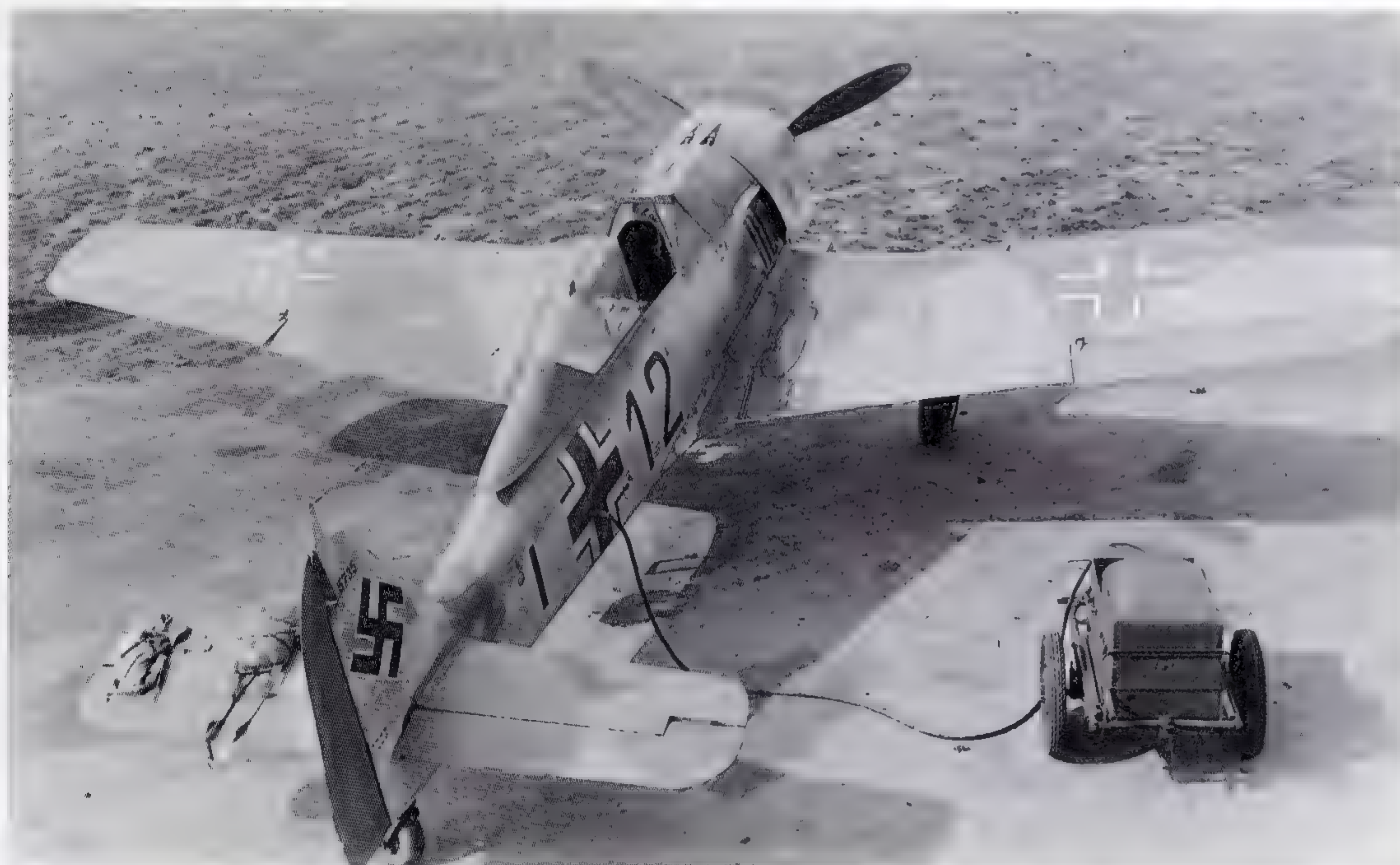


RIGHT:
Fw 190 A-4
W.Nr. 7099 on a
rain-soaked airfield
at Cherbourg,
early 1943.

RIGHT: Bruno Stolle flew with 8./JG 2 during the Battle of Britain and became Staffelführer on 7 December 1940, at which time he had three victories. This photograph, taken in the Spring of 1941, shows Stolle in the left foreground.



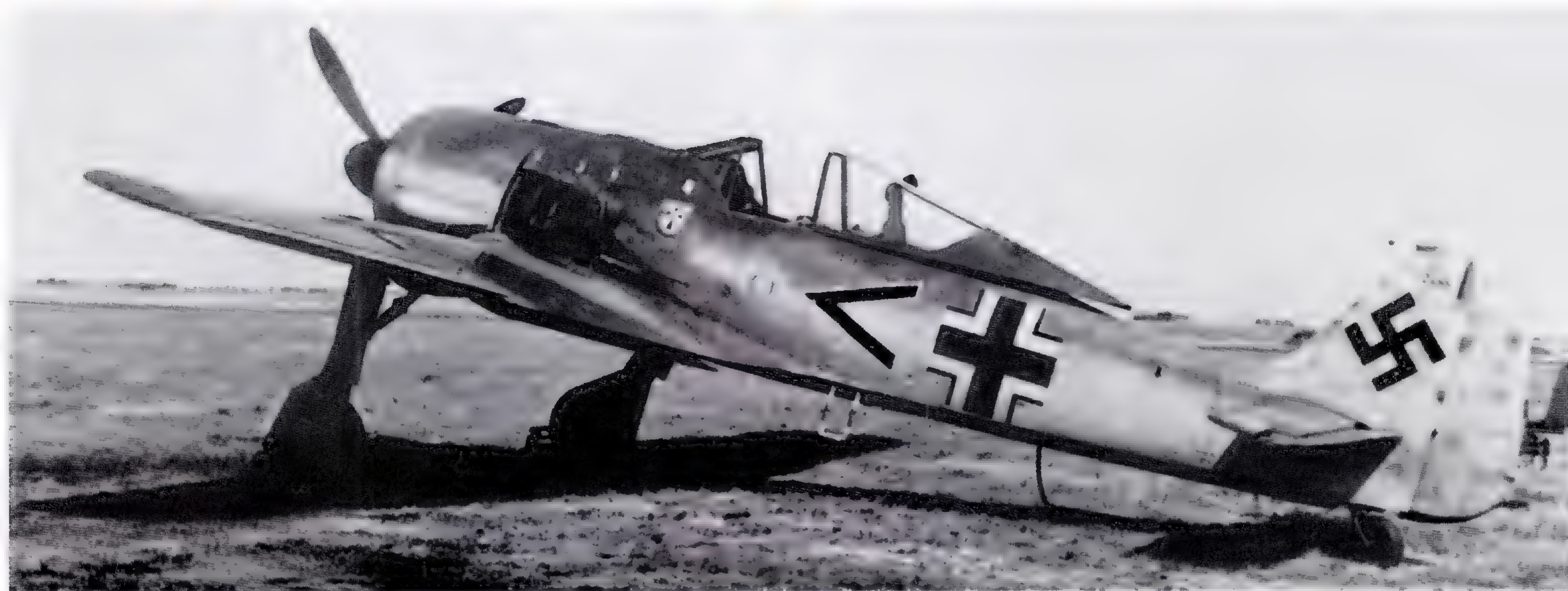
RIGHT AND BELOW RIGHT: Stolle's score increased during 1941, and on 23 July he shot down a Spitfire as his sixth victory. One of the Spitfire's wheels was salvaged and in this photograph, (RIGHT) taken shortly afterwards, Stolle is being presented with it as a souvenir. It was later mounted above the wooden hangar at St. Pol in which his Bf 109 F was housed.



ABOVE: Stolle's 8./JG 2 later converted to the Fw 190, and this photograph, believed taken in early 1943, shows Stolle's Fw 190 A-4 'Black 12' with his parachute and life jacket on the tailplane ready for a quick start. The pattern of the 74 and 75 uppersurface colours is particularly well shown and the rudder and underside of the engine were yellow. The W.Nr. 5735 was painted on the fin.

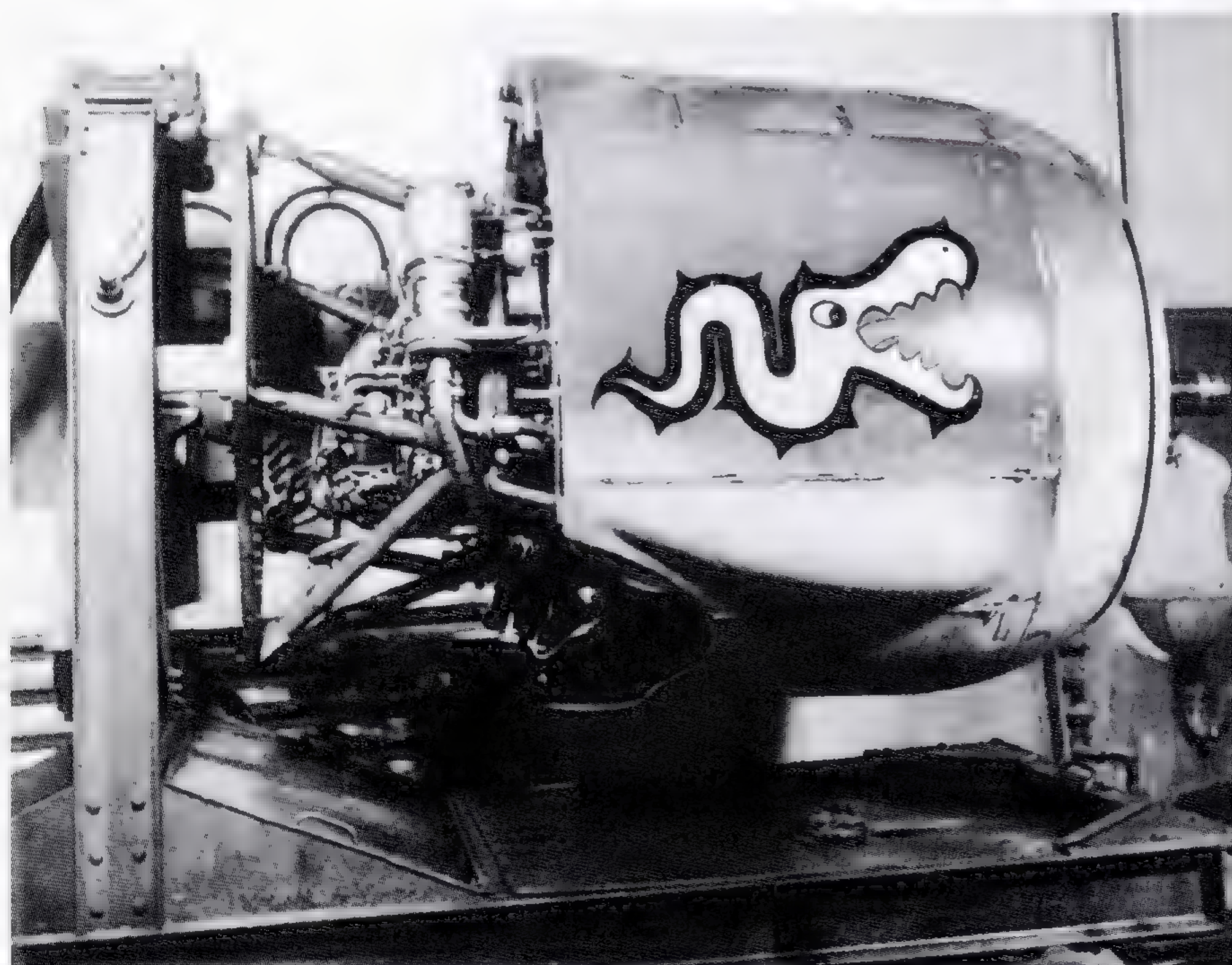


RIGHT: Hptm. Bruno Stolle adjusting his parachute harness. Although Staffelführer of 8./JG 2 when this photograph was taken, this and other photographs show that he retained his 'Black 12' marking. With 32 victories, Stolle was awarded the Ritterkreuz on 17 March 1943. On 1 July, he was appointed Kommandeur of III./JG 2 and led the Gruppe until 7 December 1943.



ABOVE: This Fw 190 A-2, W.Nr. 0485, was the aircraft assigned to Lt. Deterra, the Gruppenadjutant of III./JG 1. It was also flown on a number of occasions in August 1942 by Uffz. Heinz Hanke.

RIGHT: Uffz. Heinz Hanke of 9./JG 1 accounted for his first victory shortly before noon on 26 February 1943 when he shot down a B-24 participating in a raid on Wilhelmshaven which crashed into the sea off Heligoland. Here, Hanke (far right) is standing by the rudder of his Fw 190 A-4, W.Nr. 5701, as a colleague applies a victory bar to record the event. It is unclear why two US stars are being applied.



LEFT: When the BMW 801 D engine of the Fw 190 was damaged or exceeded the allowed flying hours, the whole unit complete with cowlings was removed and sent for repair and refurbishment. This photograph shows an engine, removed from an aircraft of 4./JG 1 and still retaining the Staffel's white Tatzelwurm, on a factory test bed. The ease and speed with which the engine could be changed was a feature of the Fw 190 and one pilot described how a fitter, a BMW mechanic and a third man with no experience changed his engine within four hours.

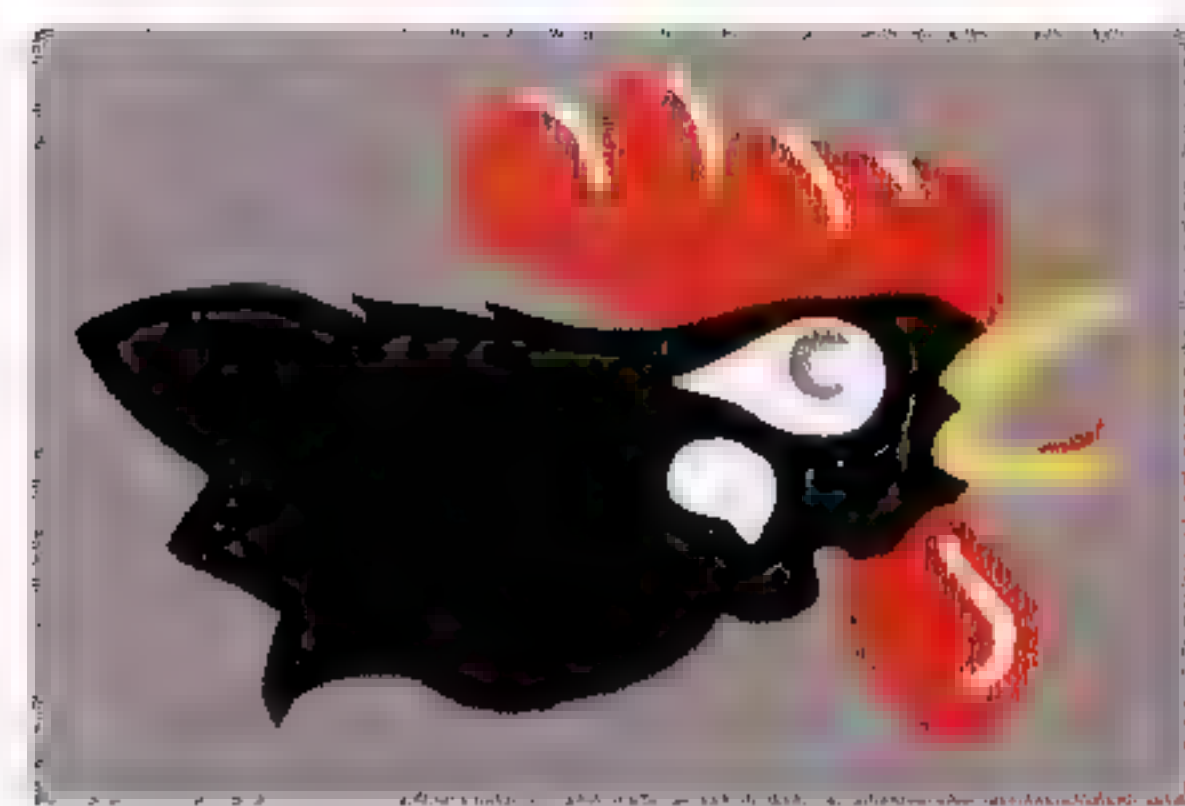
RIGHT: Adolf "Addi" Glunz joined the Luftwaffe on 1 September 1939. On completion of his flying training, he was posted to JG 52 and on 9 November 1940 was assigned to 4./JG 52. He recorded his first victory, an RAF Spitfire, on 7 May, claimed a second 12 days later, and subsequently accompanied the Geschwader when it transferred to Russia. He recorded three victories during his time on the Eastern Front before joining II./JG 26 in the West in July 1941 and on 27 August claimed his sixth victory. By the end of 1942, he had accumulated 23 victories and on 28 March 1943, he succeeded in shooting down two Mosquito bombers in the space of one minute as victories 28 and 29, adding his 30th on 3 April. Two days later, he claimed his first American four-engined bomber to bring his score to 32. On 29 August 1943, he became the only NCO in the history of JG 26 to receive the Ritterkreuz. On 31 December, Glunz claimed his 50th victory and on 15 January 1944, still only an Oberfeldwebel, he was appointed Staffelführer of 5./JG 26. Just seven days later on 22 February 1944, he achieved six victories in one day, including five four-engined bombers, as victories 54 to 59. On 24 February, Glunz transferred to 6./JG 26, later becoming Staffelführer. On 31 March, he was finally promoted to Leutnant and on 24 June he received the Eichenlaub following his 65th victory. In December he was promoted to Oberleutnant and recorded his 71st and final victory, an RAF Spitfire, on 1 January 1945. Glunz relinquished command of 6./JG 26 in March, and on the 18th was sent to III./EJG 2 to convert to the Me 262, after which he was assigned to JG 7 and remained with this unit until the cessation of hostilities in May 1945. Although continually in action, he was never shot down, wounded or lost an aircraft in aerial combat. "Addi" Glunz flew a total of 574 missions, 238 of which resulted in contact with the enemy, and in addition to his 71 confirmed victories which included 19 four-engined bombers, it is possible he may have destroyed a further ten aircraft which were not confirmed.



ABOVE: Hermann Staiger was one of the most successful bomber destroyers. At the beginning of the war he was with III./JG 51 and became Staffelführer of 7./JG 51 in September 1940. Subsequently, on the Eastern Front, Oblt. Staiger was awarded the Ritterkreuz on 16 July 1941 for his 26 victories and many ground-attack missions. Following a brief period as an instructor, Staiger became Staffelführer of 12./JG 26 on the Western Front, arriving to take up his appointment on 5 July 1943. At the end of July he succeeded in shooting down five B-17s in a period of little over seven days. He later became Kommandeur of II./JG 1, served with JG 7, and survived the war with a total of 63 victories. His victory tally included 49 claimed in the West, 26 of which were four-engined bombers.

BELOW: Another leading Expert against the American bombers was Günther Specht, seen here boarding a Bf 109 G at Jever during the early Summer of 1943. A former Bf 110 pilot with 3./ZG 76, Günther Specht received serious wounds on 3 December 1939 which resulted in the loss of the sight in his left eye. Refusing to allow this disability to prevent him from flying, he continued to fly operationally until he was wounded again on 23 May 1940. Following a period of recovery, he became a staff officer and, on 31 October 1941, became Gruppenkommandeur of III./Nachtjagdschule 1, a position he held until 31 October 1942. At the end of 1942, Specht returned to a combat role with JG 1 where, as a member of the 10. Staffel, he shot down his first B-17 on 26 February 1943. In May 1943, Specht became Kommandeur of II./JG 11, going on to achieve a total of 24 victories by the end of the year including 14 four-engined bombers. On 8 April, following his 31st victory, he was awarded the Ritterkreuz and on 15 May 1944, became Kommodore of JG 11. During Operation 'Bodenplatte' on 1 January 1945, he was listed as missing in action near Asch, presumably a victim of flak, after achieving a total of 34 victories, all in the West, of which 15 were four-engined bombers. He was posthumously promoted to the rank of Oberstleutnant and recommended for the award of the Eichenlaub.





Variation of
III./JG 2 Badge

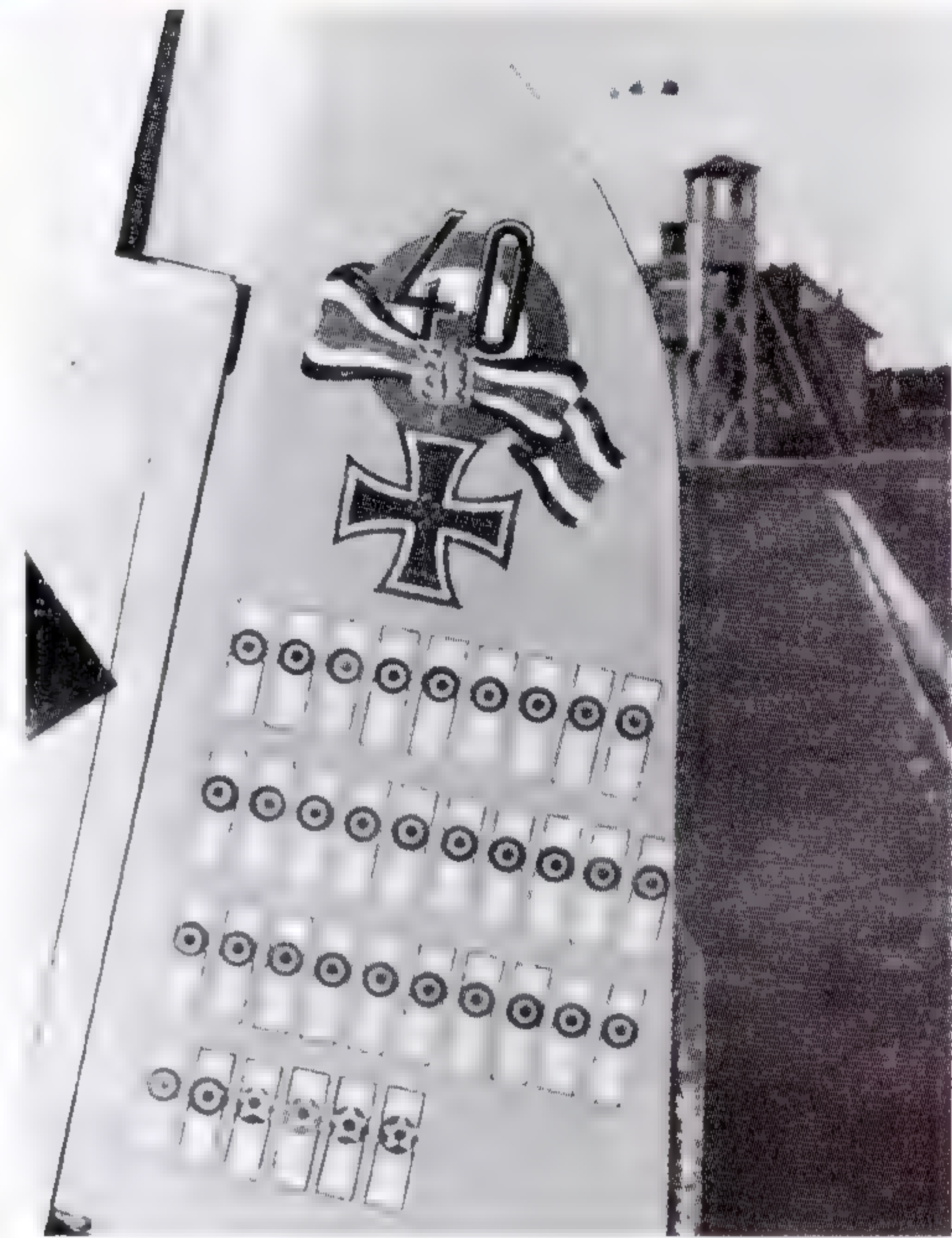
LEFT AND BELOW: Starboard side views of the Fw 190 A-4 W.Nr. 746 flown by Siegfried Schnell, Staffelkapitän of 9./JG 2, shown at the end of 1942 when the aircraft had 72 victory bars on the yellow-painted rudder. Note the oversprayed area on the rear fuselage.



RIGHT: A further view of Oblt. Siegfried Schnell's Fw 190 A-4 pictured at Vannes, France, shortly after Schnell achieved his 75th victory, an as yet unidentified American aircraft claimed on 18 February 1943. Schnell would later become one of the most successful Jagdflieger on the Western Front, where he achieved a total of 87 victories, later becoming Kommandeur of III./JG 54 in May 1943 and taking command of IV./JG54 in February 1944.



LEFT AND RIGHT: Siegfried Schnell's Focke Wulf 190A-4, at Vannes in mid-February 1943, with 75 victory bars displayed on both sides of the rudder, the last four showing victories over American aircraft, of which two were four-engined bombers.



Focke-Wulf 190 A-4 flown by Oblt. Siegfried Schnell, Staffelkapitän of 9./JG 2, France, February 1943

Although finished in standard fighter colours, the high-demarcation 74/75 scheme on this machine was broken up to blend with the 76 undersurfaces in a line of fairly regular mottles. It would seem that this particular aircraft was originally part of a batch destined for the Eastern Front since, as was usual for aircraft operating in that theatre, the lower wingtips were yellow. This aircraft also once had a yellow fuselage band, but this had been oversprayed. The most unusual feature of this aircraft, however, was the fact that the eagle emblem over the exhaust areas was different on each side of the fuselage, the port side having the full eagle, complete with head, whereas on the starboard side only the eagle's wing was represented.





*THIS PAGE AND
OPPOSITE TOP:* This
particular aircraft,
'Brown 1', an
Fw 190 A-6 of 6./JG 26,
was flown by the
Staffelkapitän, Hptm.
Johannes Naumann,
and is believed to have
been photographed at
Lille-Vendeville on
26 July 1943. Note that
only the right
undercarriage door
under the fuselage
remains on this aircraft.
These doors were
deleted entirely when
the aircraft was fitted
with a rack for carrying
a bomb or a drop tank.





LEFT: Also photographed at Lille-Vendeville in late July 1943 was 'Brown 9', an Fw 190 A-5 of 6./JG 26, seen emerging from its camouflaged dispersal.



LEFT: One of the most successful pilots on the Channel Front was Lt. Josef Wurmheller of JG 2, who was awarded the Ritterkreuz on 4 September 1941, the Deutsches Kreuz in Gold on 21 August 1942, the Eichenlaub on 13 November 1942 and the Swords on 24 October 1944. It is known that his final victory tally came to 102, but contemporary photographs show that the rudder markings on the two Fw 190s he flew in the Summer of 1943 sometimes contained errors, almost certainly as a result of victory bars being added before official confirmation was received. In this photograph, (*RIGHT*) the Ritterkreuz and Eichenlaub design and number 60 on Hptm. Wurmheller's Fw 190 A-5, W. Nr. 7334, commemorate the victories he had achieved when he was awarded the Oak Leaves on 20 August 1942, but although the 14 additional victory bars correspond exactly with the known date of the photograph, July 1943, the sequence of nationalities shown cannot be reconciled with latest research. For example, in the last row of bars, the nationality of the five victories corresponds with Wurmheller's confirmed victories of two B-17s on 16 February 1943, a Typhoon on 12 March, a B-17 on 16 April and another B-17 on 1 May. These, however, brought his official tally to 71, not 74 as painted on the rudder.



ABOVE: The port side of the same aircraft, now marked with 75 victories. This photograph was taken at Vannes, again in July 1943, and shows Lt. Wurmheller with Fw. Kopp (left) and Fw. Bleyer, both of whom have just been awarded the EK II.

BELOW: This photograph again shows Lt. Wurmheller (fourth from left) with W.Nr. 7334, the rudder of which has now been decorated with at least 80 victory bars. This, however, reveals another discrepancy as, according to a reliable source, Wurmheller's 80th confirmed victory was probably shot down on 27 August 1943, whereas this particular aircraft had already been written off on 29 July when it was rammed by another of the Staffel's machines.



July 1941-August 1943



Fw 190 A-6 'Yellow 2', W.Nr. 530314, flown by Oblt. Josef Wurmheller, Staffelkapitän of 9./JG 2, Vannes, August 1943

Oblt. Wurmheller's aircraft was finished in a 74/75/76 scheme with lightly sprayed elongated mottles on the fuselage sides which extended to a fairly low level. A yellow identification panel appeared under the nose and the yellow rudder was adorned with a beautifully executed device representing the Knight's Cross and Oak Leaves, complete with ribbon enclosing the number 60 and an RAF roundel. Instead of the black eagle wing design painted over the exhaust outlet area, this aircraft had only the simplified black panel shown here.

RIGHT AND BELOW: Lt. Wurmheller's other 'Yellow 2' was an Fw 190 A-6, W.Nr. 530314, shown in these photographs with the total number of victory bars now reduced to 78 and amended so that the second row now consists entirely of US aircraft, the victory over the Typhoon having been removed. The revised sequence of markings — eight US stars followed by three RAF roundels — corresponds with Wurmheller's victories over B-17s and Spitfires up to 22 August. Yet again, however, the markings are not entirely correct as, up to 22 August, Wurmheller was eventually credited with achieving three more B-17s than this sequence shows. The photograph (*BELOW*) is believed to have been taken shortly after a mission against Spitfires and shows Wurmheller with Lt. Jung, one of III./JG 2's senior technical personnel. Note that the decorative Ritterkreuz design is not identical to that on Wurmheller's W.Nr. 7334 and that enough of the forward fuselage may be seen to confirm that this aircraft has not been marked with the full black and white eagle's wing over the exhaust outlets.





LEFT: One lesson quickly learned when German fighters began to take on the US heavy bombers was the vital importance of heavy weapons. With the Bf 109 G-6/R6 shown here, the original armament increased from one 20 mm cannon and two 7.9 mm machine guns to three 20 mm and two 13 mm weapons. Two of the 20mm cannon were mounted in underwing gondolas and resulted in this version being known as the "Kanonenboot", or "Gunboat". In this rare colour photograph of a Bf 109 G-6/R6 belonging to JG 3, the nature of the 74/75/76 camouflage is clearly visible.

RIGHT: The standard armament of the Fw 190 included two Rheinmetall MG 17 machine guns of 7.92 mm calibre mounted in the fuselage. These were standard in the Fw 190 from the A-1 up to and including the A-6 of 1943 and were installed in conjunction with two Mauser MG 151/20 cannon in the inner wing. Two optional Rheinmetall MG FF 20 mm cannon could also be installed in the outer wing depending on the nature of air fighting



LEFT: As with the Bf 109, it was found that combating US four-engined bombers required a heavier firepower, and by deleting the outer MG FF wing cannon from each wing it was possible to install a weapons pack containing two MG 151 cannon. Some of the first units to employ this combination, which increased the Fw 190's firepower to six 20 mm weapons plus two 7.9 mm cowlings weapons, were JG 1, JG 2 and JG 11 which employed this heavier armament from July 1943.

Jabos as Night Bombers

The growth in US airpower throughout 1942 and 1943 was matched by that of the RAF which carried out increasingly heavier night attacks on German cities. Notwithstanding the fact that the major part of the German bomber fleet was operating in Russia and the Mediterranean, a growing source of frustration for the *Führer* was that *Luftwaffe* bomber strength in the West was incapable of inflicting any significant damage on Britain. Moreover, it had become abundantly clear that the available aircraft types were not equal to the task. Technological progress had rendered the Ju 88 and Do 217 obsolete and their losses – especially due to British night-fighters – were unbearably high and out of all proportion to the results achieved.

New, more advanced types such as the Me 410, Ju 88S, Ju 188 and He 177 which might operate more successfully against Britain were either still in the development stage or were available only in insufficient numbers, and even once available, conversion of bomber units to these new aircraft was bound to take time. Until this new bomber force was ready to commence operations, the air offensive against Britain was to be maintained by harassing activity over London and Southern England by a fast bomber which was less vulnerable to enemy night-fighters. Because of the successful daylight attacks by the *Jabo Staffeln*, the Fw 190 was the obvious choice of aircraft for this task.

Acutely aware of the success of the *Jabo* attacks on Southern England, and its inability to counter them, the RAF was continually on the alert for any indication that the enemy was planning to increase such units. Therefore, some consternation was caused when, on 28 February 1943, a photo-reconnaissance aircraft brought back photographs showing 24 Fw 190s on Rennes/St. Jacques airfield. At first, the aircraft were believed to belong either to a unit undergoing re-equipment, or to a unit in the process of formation, though whether or not the aircraft were fighter-bombers was unknown. Intelligence, however, warned that this unit might at any time be expected to commence operations anywhere, at any time and without any prior warning. Soon, ULTRA revealed that the unit was indeed a fighter-bomber *Gruppe* operating under the designation II./SKG 10, and although the significance of the abbreviation was at first not understood, by early April the unit had been identified as a fast bomber wing, or *Schnellkampfgeschwader*.

Although the officers selected for key positions within the *Gruppe* had wide experience and many were highly decorated, none had any knowledge of night flying. Most of the pilots, too, had either been instructors at flying schools or pupils who had just completed flying training, and as well as lacking any operational experience or of flying fighter-type aircraft, had neither night-flying nor blind-flying experience. After short and hurried courses at a fighter school and a conversion course, further training was combined with a few *Jabo* attacks against the south-west coast of England.

Meanwhile, a second *Gruppe*, I./SKG 10 had been formed and carried out its first operation on 7 March when 18 Fw 190s attacked Eastbourne. The raiders were undetected until their bombs began to explode, no RAF fighters intercepted and as well as 14 civilians and 7 servicemen killed, a number of buildings were destroyed or damaged. Similar hit-and-run raids continued and at first achieved astonishing success out of all proportion to the numbers of aircraft involved. The British defences, however, were quick to respond and it was soon discovered that frequent missions alerted the already increased anti-aircraft defences and fighter squadrons now operating the Typhoon. Losses began to mount, some 14 *Jabos* being lost on operations in the first three months of 1943, and while this loss rate might be considered acceptable in view of the damage caused and the RAF effort required to counter them, the *Luftwaffe* authorities perceived it as prohibitive and I. and II./SKG 10 were ordered to switch to night attacks.

Although *Reichsmarschall* Göring had already set up a new staff, known as *Angriffsführer England*, to organise attacks against Britain, this was almost immediately required to transfer to the Mediterranean. Responsibility for operations against Great Britain was therefore entrusted to *Luftflotte* 3 but, unfortunately, the staff of this authority failed to appreciate the limitations and special nature of night operations flown with a single-seat, single-engined aircraft, so that by early April, when the pilots of I. and II./SKG 10 were regarded as trained for night attacks, too much was demanded of them too soon.

Night operations were planned for the six nights before and six after the full moon in April 1943, the first being scheduled for the night of 16/17 April when the target was London. Each aircraft was loaded with an SC 250 bomb and, in addition to a normal full fuel load, carried two jettisonable auxiliary tanks. The attack was to be made in two waves, one before and one after midnight. Conditions were ideal: cloudless, with light haze and a full moon, but the mission was poorly prepared and even night-flying ground control was unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, I./SKG 10 moved up to its forward airfield at Poix, while II. *Gruppe* assembled at Amiens/Glisy.

The operation was a disaster. At Poix, three Fw 190 A-5s collided in the darkness while taking off and were completely destroyed, killing *Oblt.* Rudolf Trenn, the *Staffelkapitän* of 3. *Staffel*, who had previously led 8./St.G 77, from which the 3. *Staffel* had been formed. Trenn, who had flown more than 500 missions with the Ju 87 and had received the German Cross in Gold, was posthumously awarded the *Ritterkreuz*. Other pilots found that enemy action, particularly the searchlights and anti-aircraft fire, was unnerving, for while the guns scored no hits, the effect of shells exploding in the darkness was so disturbing that the pilots were unable concentrate on their navigation. The result was that although light beacons were activated to aid navigation and home airfields were lit, some pilots lost their way, and such was the presumed fate of the *Staffelkapitän* of 2./SKG 10, *Oblt.* Kurt-Hans Klahn, who was killed when his aircraft apparently ran out of fuel and he baled out at too low an altitude, his body being found at Staplehurst in Kent close to his aircraft which was reported to have just fallen out of the sky with its engine stopped. Others either crashed or baled out over France when their fuel was exhausted.

Meanwhile, at Amiens/Glisy, 15 pilots of II./SKG 10 had been briefed by their *Staffelkapitäne* that they were to bomb military and industrial targets along the Thames, but as with I. *Gruppe*, things went badly wrong. Two pilots lost their bearings, mistook the lights of West Malling airfield, which had been switched on to aid friendly pilots, for those of an airfield in France and landed, followed by a third which also landed short of petrol.

“This fighter-bomber business is no earthly use. It is damned risky now against these [British] fighters here. I mean, we are completely at their mercy and can do nothing about it. The distances are such that the petrol is just sufficient to get us there and back. The fighters come along and, even if you could do something and could shake them off by taking evasive action, then you wouldn’t have enough to get home. All you can do is step on it, release your bombs and then just watch yourself being shot down.”

*Lt. Fritz Setzer of 5./SKG 10,
from a CSDIC report following his capture on 17 April 1943.*

SKG 10 mounted further attacks during May the weeks between the bright moon periods seeing a resumption in daylight attacks which proved remarkably successful, losses being far lower than in the attempted night attacks. Early in the morning of 7 May, the *Luftwaffe* made its first daylight *Jabo* raid since 9 April when about 20 Fw 190s made a low-level attack against Yarmouth and a nearby radar station, the attack only being evident when the first bombs exploded. About 18 *Jabos* again attacked Yarmouth on the 11th and in the most successful attacks of the month, the Lowestoft area was twice attacked on the 12th by about 20 Fw 190s which escaped without loss.

On the 14th, P-47 pilots reported having encountered up to 30 yellow-nosed Fw 190s north-west of Antwerp and although no victories were claimed, the aircraft were almost certainly from SKG 10 as they were reported to have had black undersides. Coincidentally, nocturnal operations resumed that night when 16 fighter-bomber sorties were reported against London in four waves between 23.09 and 04.25 hrs.

Similar attacks continued – with another Fw 190 landing intact at RAF Manston on the night of 19/20 May – until daylight operations were resumed on the 23rd with simultaneous lunchtime attacks on Hastings and Bournemouth. Particularly successful was the attack on Bournemouth where considerable damage was caused to the town centre, 50 buildings being destroyed, over 3,000 damaged and 77 civilians killed and almost 200 injured. One bomb scored a direct hit on a hotel being used by trainee aircrew, killing 31 servicemen. The least successful of the month’s raids was on the evening of 25 May when an attack on Folkestone was disrupted by Spitfire XIIs which broke up an attacking formation of 12 Fw 190s before they reached their target and shot down the Fw 190 A-5 flown by *Oblt.* Josef Keller of 5./SKG 10.

On 30 May, SKG 10 launched two separate attacks on the Devon and Essex coasts. Two aircraft were lost in the Essex attack and, in the afternoon of the 30th, about 15 of the unit’s Fw 190s bombed Torquay causing considerable damage and casualties. Another five aircraft were lost in this raid, including the aircraft flown by *Gefr.* Karl Laue of 15./SKG 10 which was hit by anti-aircraft fire and suffered damage to its tail. Laue jettisoned his bomb but his aircraft clipped the spire of a church and crashed. His jettisoned bomb struck another church where it exploded, killing 21 children.

There were further daylight *Jabo* attacks during the first four days in June but then, ironically in view of the fact that the British considered them to have been especially successful, they ceased completely. For much of 1943, the hit-and-run attacks had met with considerable success, yet most of that success had not been realised by the Germans who, unaware of their achievements, tended only

July 1941-August 1943

RIGHT AND FAR RIGHT: One of the last daylight fighter-bomber raids on England's South Coast took place on the late morning of 4 June 1943 when 18 Fw 190s crossed the coast at Beachy Head at zero feet and turned to drop a total of 13 SC 500 bombs on Eastbourne. One of the attacking aircraft was flown by Oblt. Hevler of IV./SKG 10, whose aircraft, W.Nr. 51353, was hit by light anti-aircraft fire. Hevler attempted to make a forced landing but crashed at Norman's Bay, Bexhill. These photographs show Allied troops inspecting the remains of the machine.



to see the losses. This may have been one reason for discontinuing the attacks, but more significantly, following the final surrender of Axis forces in Tunisia on 12 May 1943, the *Luftwaffe* began reinforcing *Luftflotte 2* in the Mediterranean in anticipation of Allied invasions which might provide footholds for landings in Italy. The III./SKG 10 was already based in Sicily, this *Gruppe* having been raised in North Africa in December 1942, and was joined in June by II./SKG 10 for sorties against Tunisia and Malta.

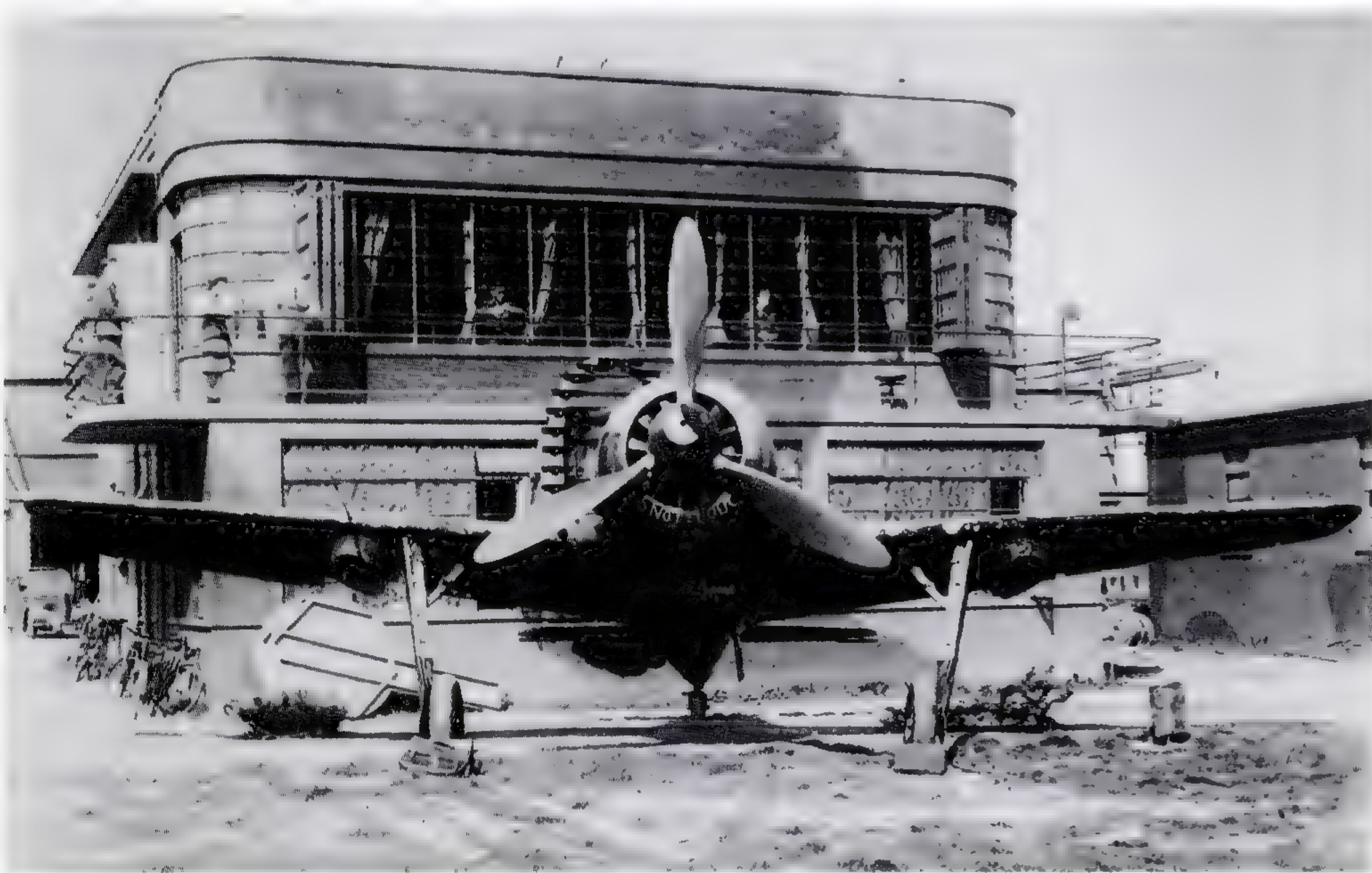
Soon only I./SKG 10 remained in the West where it became something of a jack of all trades. Apart from the night attacks against Britain, the *Gruppe* was also called upon to fly reconnaissance flights along the South Coast of England, carry out occasional day fighter missions over Germany as far as Schleswig-Holstein and day- and night-fighter operations over France, especially against four-engined bombers returning to England. The *Gruppe's* main role, however, was the night bombing of Britain, not that anyone was under any illusion that these raids would cause great damage but they were of considerable nuisance value, the maximum effect being achieved by sending out aircraft at three-minute intervals over a long period.

In July 1943, the task of bringing retribution to England was finally entrusted to *Oberst* Dietrich Pelz, who relinquished his position as *General der Kampfflieger* to assume command of IX. *Fliegerkorps* reinforced extensively with bomber units withdrawn from the Mediterranean. The force under his command eventually consisted of some 550-600 aircraft permitting an operational effort of 350-400 aircraft. By this time, however, the RAF had devised effective defensive measures matched exactly to the conditions under which the Fw 190s operated. For example, after a difficult night take-off with a fully-loaded aircraft, pilots then found the entire frequency band of their radio was jammed and were unable to communicate with each other or with their ground-control. Navigating over blacked-out territory was therefore visual and by dead-reckoning, no simple matter in the cockpit of an Fw 190 which was so narrow that a map could not be unfolded. The aircraft's high speed, too, was a disadvantage in this respect for, once a pilot had worked out where he was, he had long since passed that point.

Flying individually, the pilots were instructed to climb until they had reached approximately mid-Channel where, at an altitude of about 6,000 metres, they levelled off, jettisoning their drop tanks shortly before reaching the English coast. A gradual descent was then made to the target area and at about 3,000 to 4,000 metres, the pilots reverted to level flight to release their bomb. They were then to make for home in a shallow dive, regularly changing course and altitude and keeping constant watch on the airspace behind them.

In practice, however, pilots worried that they might get lost and would be unable to locate their own airfield before they ran out of fuel. Many therefore retained their auxiliary tanks for as long as possible, some even when they were empty. The result was that their aircraft's flight characteristics were adversely affected and their speed reduced, so that any advantage in using the Fw 190 was lost. While the number of Fw 190s shot down by night-fighters because they had not released their drop tanks cannot be accurately established, it is known that pilots loath to jettison them had more contact with British night-fighters.

Naturally, flying in a wavy line also increased the demands on the pilot's navigational abilities and instead of watching out for any signs of a pursuer, pilots tended to fly straight and level while they concentrated on their map and instruments in the dark confines of the narrow cockpit. Little wonder, then, that during the first two months of the night attacks, several pilots had completely lost their bearings and, short of fuel, mistook the very similar British procedure of pointing a searchlight beam in the direction of the nearest airfield for their own procedure, and had landed on British airfields. Subsequently, however, as more experience was gained, navigational errors became fewer and although there were mounting losses to RAF night-fighters, the Fw 190s of I./SKG 10 continued to present the British defences with a difficult problem.



THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE: At around midnight on 16 April 1943, eight Fw 190 aircraft from 5./SKG 10 and eight from 7./SKG 10 took off from Amiens to attack installations along the Thames near the Isle of Dogs. Each aircraft carried one 250 kg bomb under the fuselage and two drop tanks under the wings with sufficient fuel to take them to the English coast. One of the 7. Staffel aircraft taking part in this attack was an Fw 190 A-4 flown by Fw. Otto Bechtold who, after climbing steeply to 18,000 feet, crossed the French coast over Cap Gris-Nez and turned on to a direct course for London. Bechtold jettisoned his drop tanks before reaching the coast of Kent but once over land, found that pinpointing his position was difficult owing to ground mist and he became lost. He nevertheless continued on a northward course and after 40 minutes was caught and blinded by searchlights. He evaded the searchlights by releasing his bomb and making a right-hand stall turn, after which he regained control, reduced height to 300 feet and headed back towards France. After another 30 minutes he saw about six searchlights all pointing in one direction, and as there was no anti-aircraft fire, thought he was being directed to an airfield in France. He followed the direction of the searchlights, saw the lights of an airfield and, as fuel was running short, put his wheels down and prepared to land. Bechtold, however, was still over England and the airfield lights were those of RAF West Malling. Staff at this airfield heard and saw a single-engined aircraft orbiting with its navigation lights on and, expecting a Defiant, were not surprised when the aircraft fired flares and came into land. The airfield fire tender led the aircraft to be parked by the side of the watch office and one member of its crew jumped out to have a word with the pilot, who replied "in a foreign language". At that moment the fire tender crewman saw the Balkenkreuz on the side of the aircraft and immediately ran to the watch office for a rifle. Meanwhile, an unarmed member of a light AA regiment stationed on the airfield ran out to the aircraft and the "very crestfallen" pilot gave himself up without a struggle. The arrival of this aircraft caused considerable excitement throughout RAF 11 Group and during the 17th April a stream of visitors arrived by rail, road and air, the station recording 67 visiting aircraft as well as many intelligence officers from the Air Ministry. Before being flown away to Farnborough, the Fw 190 was extensively photographed while parked outside RAF West Malling's control tower. Note the "Do not touch" instructions scratched into the black distemper and the note attached to the fuselage requesting the curious not to enter the cockpit.

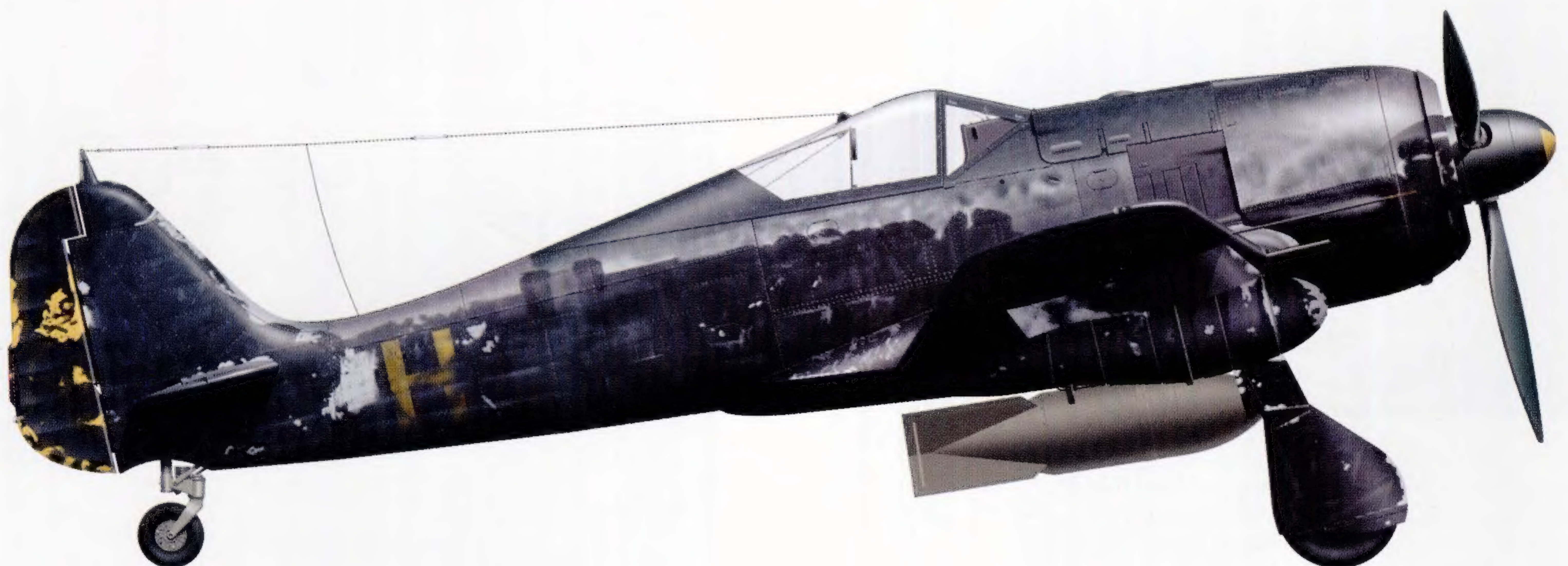
BELOW LEFT AND RIGHT: A close-up view of the drop tank fairing. This contained four steady studs and two suspension hooks for a steel strap which passed round the middle of the tank.





Focke-Wulf Fw 190 A-4 'Yellow H + ▲', W.Nr. 7155, landed at RAF West Malling by Fw. Otto Bechtold of 7/.SKG 10, 17 April 1943

The camouflage of Fw. Bechtold's aircraft consisted of the normal 74/75/76 scheme but with the whole undersurface and part of the fuselage sides smeared with a matt black distemper which partly obscured the aircraft markings, the yellow rudder and the yellow underside of the engine cowling. As may be seen in the accompanying photographs however, the matt black was scratched and worn away in many places. The Green 70 spinner had a yellow tip with a white segment which had been covered with matt black, and although the full markings included a black triangle, this had been completely obscured. The 'H' on the fuselage, which appeared aft of the cross on both sides, was still visible and was edged with black. Only the last three figures of the Werk Nummer appeared on the fin. The guns usually mounted over the engine had been removed and the gun ports and channels on top of the cowling had been blanked off, so that the only weapons retained were the two 20 mm cannon mounted in the wing roots. Note that although shown here with drop tanks still attached, these had been jettisoned by the time this machine landed at RAF West Malling.





LEFT AND BELOW: Two Fw 190 A-5/U-8s of I./SKG 10 in 1943. Note that the drop tanks are mounted on Messerschmitt racks which offered less wind resistance than the original Junkers-designed racks which were enclosed in large fairings. The Fw 190s of I./SKG 10 frequently had the cowlings guns removed and were provided with wide head armour.

BELOW: This aircraft was not operated by I./SKG 10 but is externally almost identical and is included here to provide an impression of an aircraft starting-up for a night mission. Flying the single-engined, single-seat Fw 190 bomber over England at night was difficult and dangerous enough without the additional hazards of the often cruel weather and a determined enemy. By the time I./SKG 10 began night operations in the Spring of 1943, Britain's night defences were formidable and included a night-fighter force flying radar-equipped Beaufighters and Mosquitoes which accounted for many of I./SKG10's losses. One of the RAF's most famous night-fighter pilots, the then F/Lt. JRD 'Bob' Braham, once confessed to his Intelligence Officer that he had a sneaking regard for the nameless and often brave Luftwaffe airmen whom he was killing.



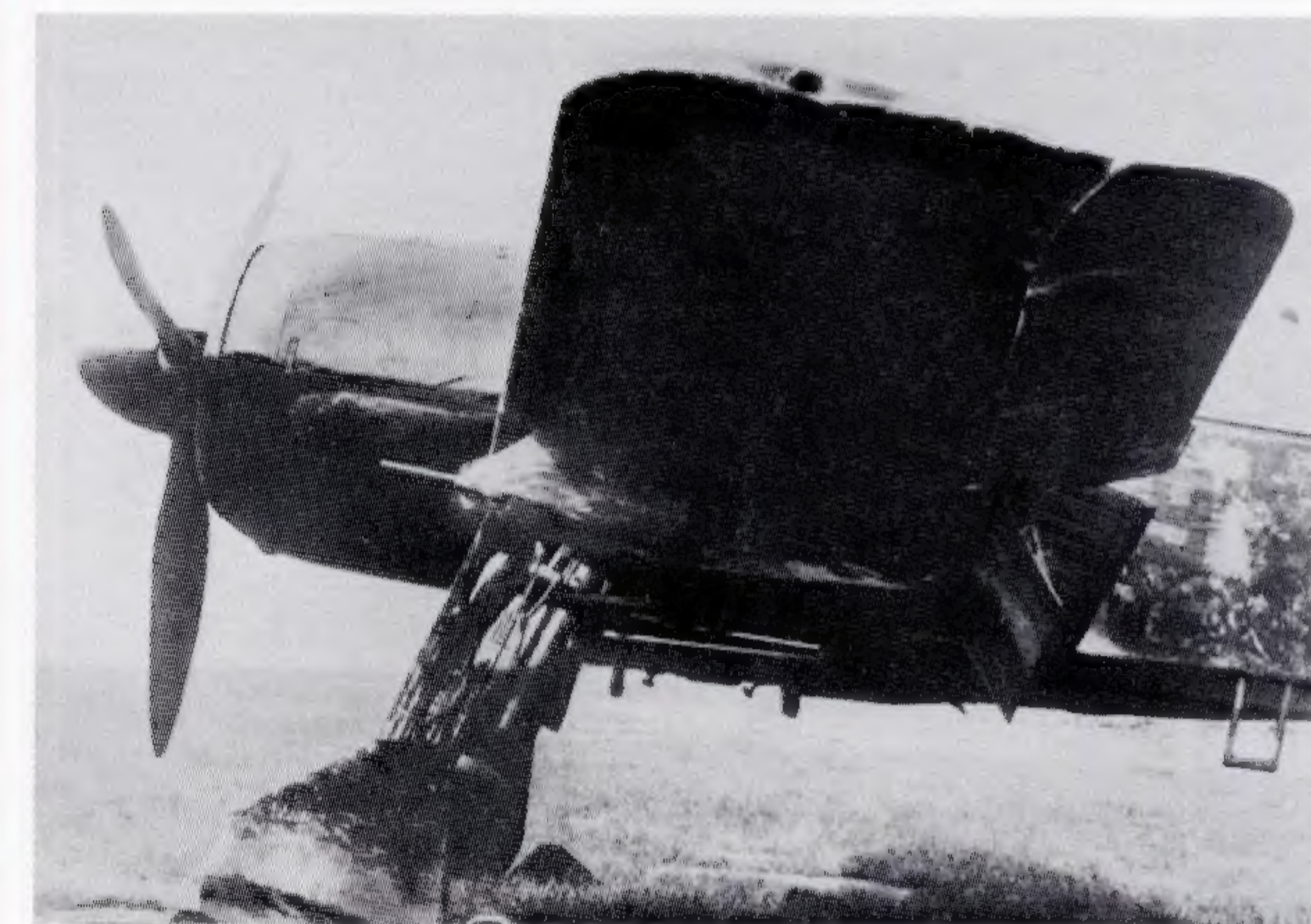
RIGHT: Although the unit to which this Fw 190 belonged has not yet been positively identified, the small identification number on the fuselage has lead to speculation that it may have belonged to SKG 10. The bomb rack beneath the fuselage certainly adds weight to this theory.





Focke-Wulf 190 A-4/U-8 'Red 9' of 2./SKG 10, landed at RAF Manston by Uffz. Heinz Erhardt, 20 May 1943

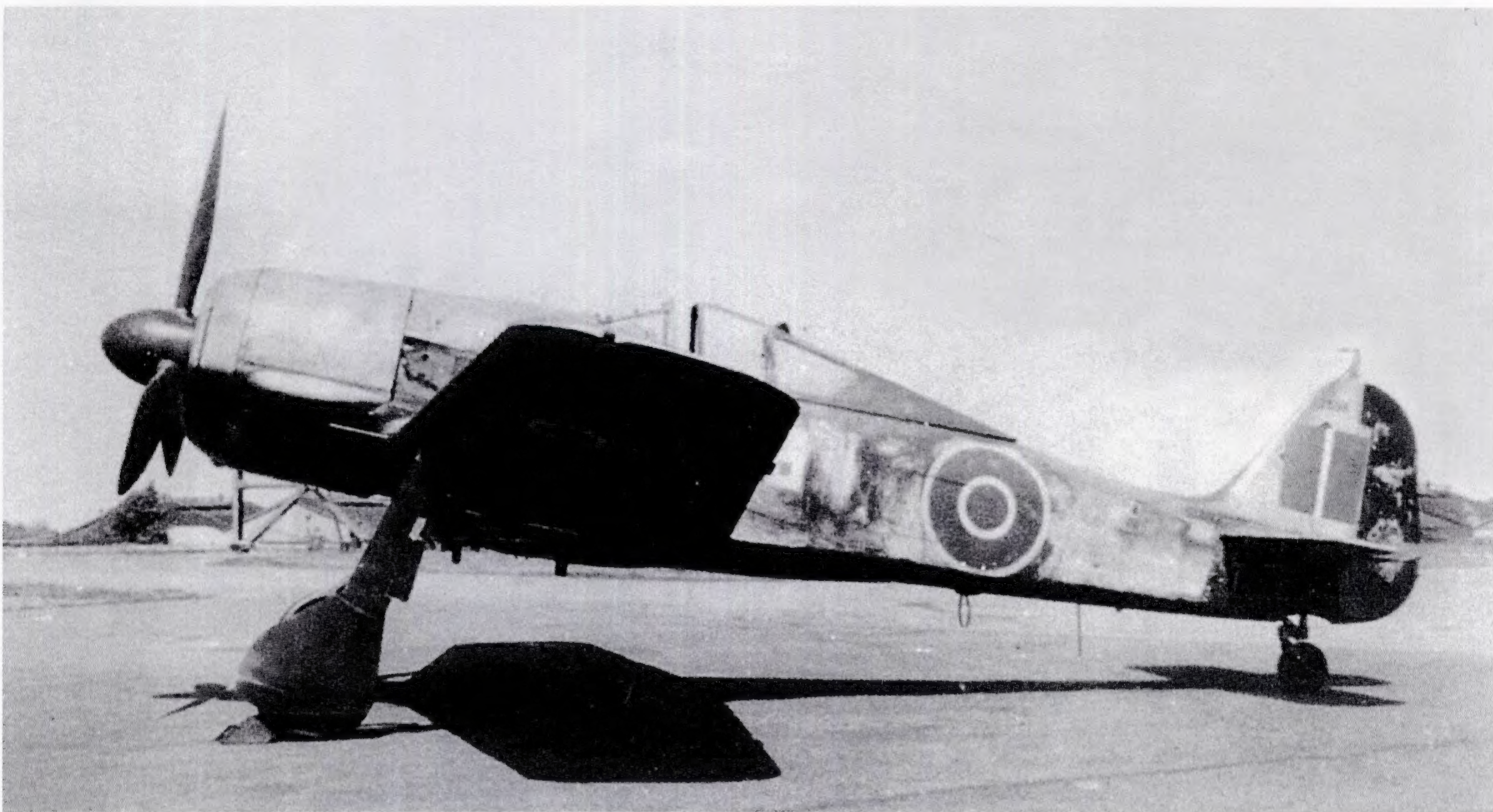
An RAF Crashed Enemy Aircraft Report on this machine describes its finish as "normal grey and blue camouflage" which had been covered with "lamp-black", a very sooty, matt black distemper, but as the accompanying photographs show, this had been applied only to the undersurfaces and fuselage sides. The red number on the fuselage side was unusually small and no attempt had been made to cover it with the matt black which was roughly applied and showed signs of considerable wear. The W.Nr. 5843 was painted on the fin, the rudder was yellow, but roughly covered with black, and the spinner was Green 70 with a one-third white segment. As with other aircraft from I./SKG 10, only the two MG 151/20 wing root cannon were carried and an ETC 501 bomb carrier was installed under the fuselage. Wide head armour was installed in order to provide increased protection for the pilot's neck and head, and two recognition lights had been fitted, a green one under the starboard wing in line with the wing cannon and behind the main spar, and another under the centre of the fuselage, just forward of the tailplane leading edge. Unfortunately, this second light had been broken and its colour is not known.



ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT: This aircraft was one of a number from SKG 10 which took off from Poix on 19 May 1943 to attack London. The pilot, Uffz. Heinz Ehrhardt of 2. Staffel, climbed to 7,000-10,000 feet and jettisoned his drop tanks before crossing the English coast. Although he received several vectors from his base, he nevertheless became lost, and when his fuel gauge showed it was time to turn for home, he dropped his bomb through a gap in the cloud and saw it land in the sea. He received several more vectors but, as he was then crossing what he believed to be the French coast east of Cap Gris-Nez, he thought them to be incorrect. He was however over the north coast of Kent and had released his bomb into the Thames Estuary. Still believing he was over France, he ignored the vectors, dropped down to 600 feet and fired two flares. A searchlight then obligingly directed its beam towards the nearest airfield and Erhardt prepared to land. As he later explained, he "let down the undercarriage, extended the landing flaps and floated in. The engine stalled, so I opened the throttle again as the aircraft crashed on the wheels and then gave a leap. I drew the control column back, opened the throttle again and let the aircraft touch down. Then it crashed down and shot off to the left. I taxied along the runway, opened the throttle again and turned to the right, thinking that although I had arrived home safely I had smashed up the aircraft! I switched off the engine and opened the canopy, but as I was getting out, someone suddenly shouted "Hands up!" He had arrived at RAF Manston, and his heavy landing had broken off the tailwheel and slightly damaged the rear fuselage and rudder. Examination of the aircraft showed that only 13 gallons of fuel remained in the main tanks.



ABOVE: Uffz. Heinz Ehrhardt, seen on the morning of 20 May with Manston's Intelligence Officer P/O Treweeks (centre) and F/Lt. Johnny Wells of 609 Squadron (right). Despite his understandably dejected appearance here, an interrogation report states that Ehrhardt's morale was high. He had joined I./SKG 10 in March and, when captured, was on his fifth operational flight.



At about 15.00 hrs on 19 June 1943, the pilots of 1./SKG 10 were briefed by their Staffelkapitän at their forward base at Poix for an attack on Ramsgate which was to take place that night. The aircraft later took off at intervals, the eighth to leave being Uffz. Werner Öhme whose aircraft, 'White 6', lifted off from Poix at 02.00 hrs carrying a 250 kg bomb and two drop tanks. The weather forecast proved to be completely inaccurate with unexpected low cloud and, in addition, Öhme discovered his radio was unserviceable due, he thought to a short circuit caused by excessive dew on the airfield. Nevertheless, he pressed on and crossed the French coast near Calais at about 12,000 feet and headed, he thought, for Dover, but soon lost his bearings. His situation was made more difficult by heavy cloud, and all his attempts to pinpoint his position failed. After a time, Öhme found himself over the sea with coastline to the south; he took this to be France but it was in fact part of the southern coast of the Thames Estuary. Turning inland over what he still thought was France, he came down to about 300 feet to endeavour to pinpoint his position but without avail. He then jettisoned his bomb over open country and arrived over Manston airfield. Coincidentally, the airfield was flashing the same signal as his own base and the floodlighting was on, as was customary at German airfields when an aircraft was overdue. He therefore came down and made a normal landing at Manston.

Focke-Wulf Fw 190 A-5/U8 'White 6', W.Nr. 52596, flown by Uffz. Werner Öhme of 1./SKG 10, Poix, 19 June 1943

This profile is intended to portray Uffz. Öhme's aircraft in its original markings, i.e. before the temporary black distemper was cleaned from the fuselage in order that the RAF roundel could be applied. The aircraft was originally camouflaged in a 74/75/76 scheme but had later had matt black applied to the undersurfaces, fuselage sides and rudder. Only the last four digits of the Werk Nummer appeared on the fin.

